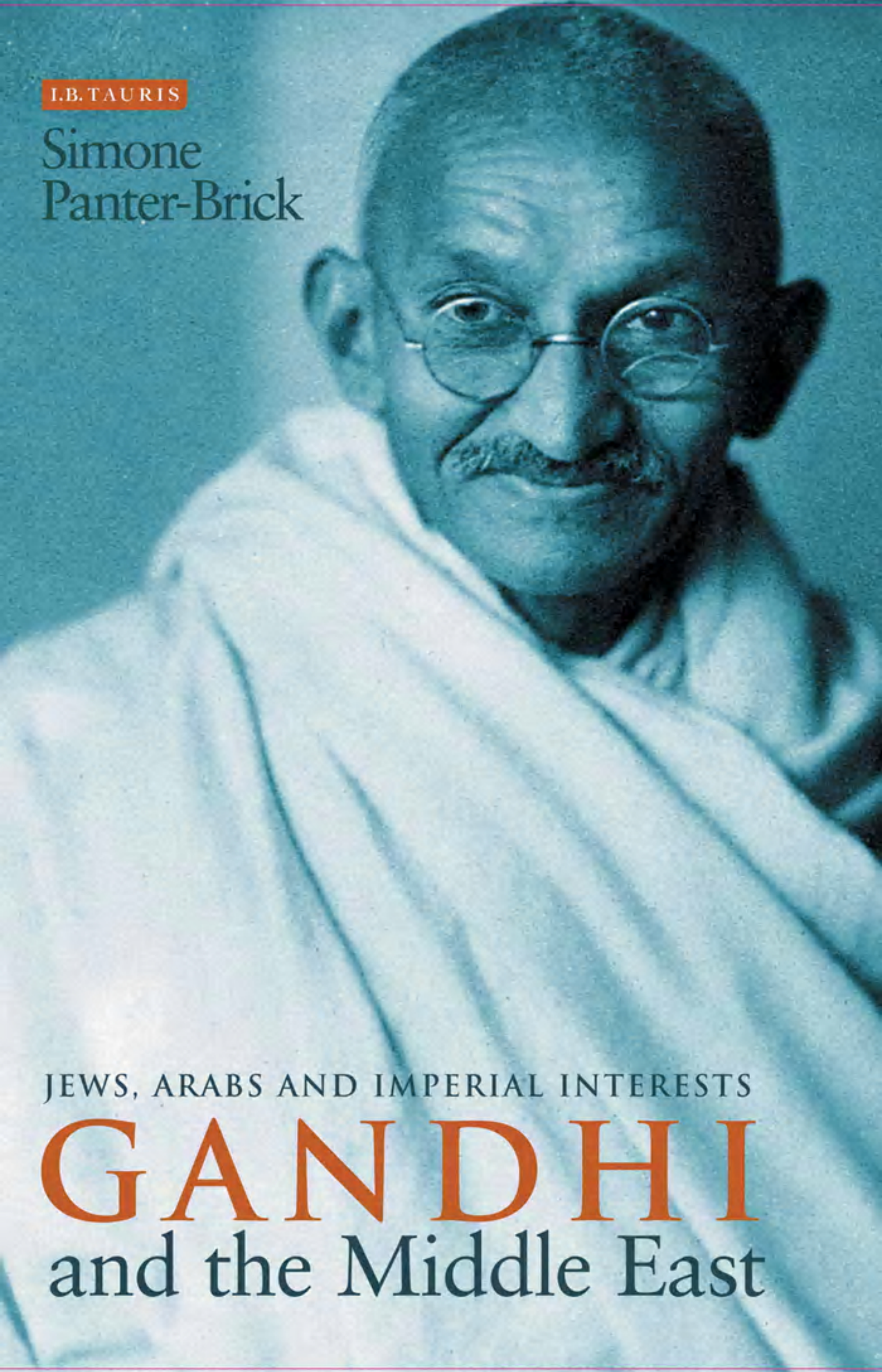


I.B.TAURIS

Simone Panter-Brick

JEWS, ARABS AND IMPERIAL INTERESTS

GANDHI and the Middle East

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Jews, Arabs and Imperial Interests

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In Your Love
My Roots

Preface

One of the virtues of Simone Panter-Brick's study is that it distills Gandhi's ideas on Palestine in his lifelong quest for an independent and unified India. The critical year was 1937, when a British parliamentary committee known as the Peel Commission proposed the partition of Palestine – at the same time that Jinnah was emerging as a figure to be reckoned with in Indian politics. Gandhi's instinctive views on the Arabs and Jews foreshadowed his premonitions of Muslim separatism. He believed Palestine to be an Arab country where the Jewish minority, as in Germany, depended on the goodwill of the majority of the population. In the late 1930s he advised the Jews, both in Palestine and in Europe, to use the same non-violent resistance that he had successfully employed in India. The Jewish response categorically rejected the possibility of being left to the gentle mercies of the Arabs or the compassionate embrace of the Nazis.

Gandhi did not succeed in achieving one of his ultimate goals, a peaceful end to British rule in India, and he failed to prevent partition. In studying the reasons why a single individual found himself at the center of such momentous events, it is vital to bear in mind that his message to the world was moral as well as political, and that the spectacular victory of civil disobedience in India had taken place under the relatively benign aegis of the British Raj. It is no whitewash of

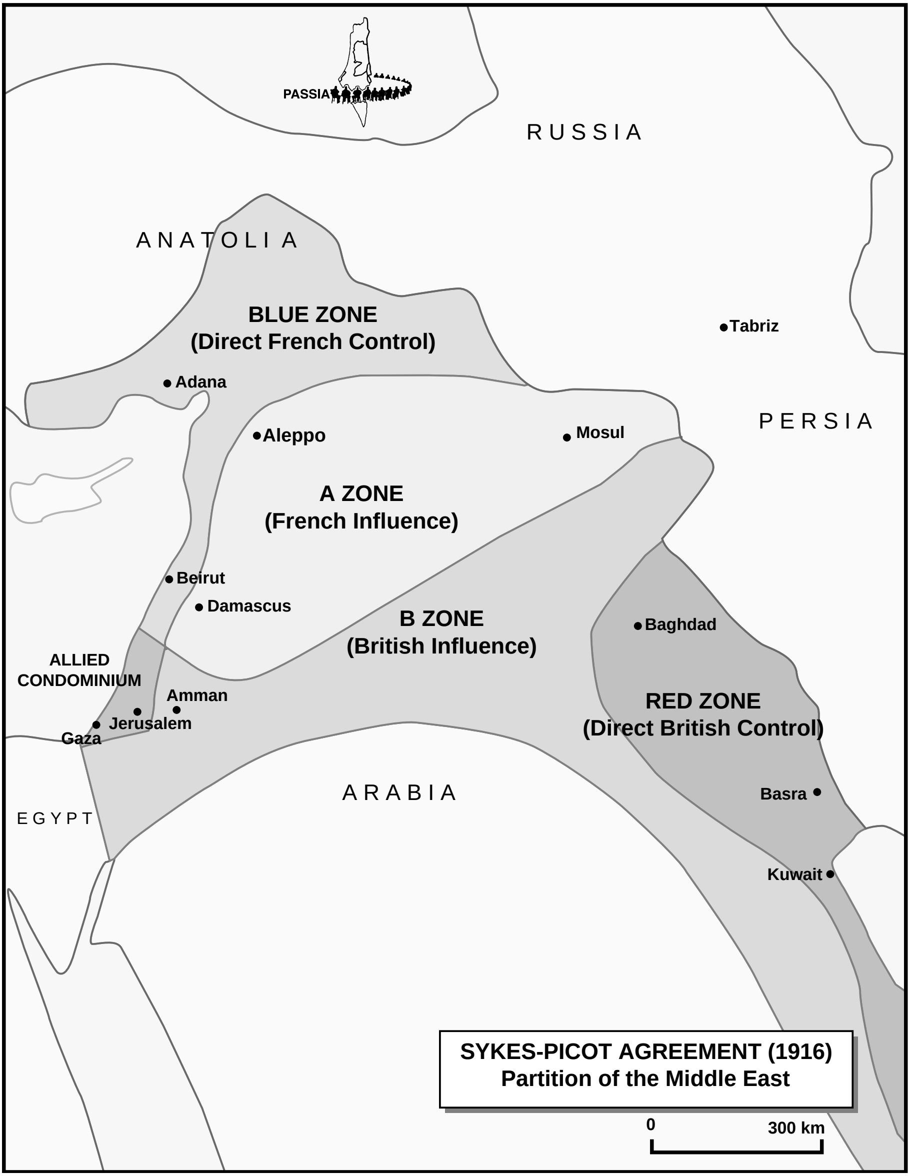
British imperialism to say that Gandhi's tactics could not have succeeded in Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union or even French Indo-China. In India he denied the moral legitimacy of the Raj and challenged British hegemony. He refused to accept anything less than the equality of the two cultures of India and Britain. He believed, or hoped, that Hindus and Muslims could live together harmoniously after the British departure, and that all Indians, Muslim as well as Hindu and Sikh, would be represented by the Indian National Congress. Some of his critics at the time thought his view of British rule, in Palestine no less than in India, to be simplistic, and many Muslims refused to believe that an India dominated by the Congress would be anything other than a Hindu Raj.

In a post-imperial age, it is easy to be sceptical about a natural harmony of interests. Gandhi held the uncomplicated view that all would be well as soon as the British departed. Until the very last stage of British rule, he rejected the growing certainty that Muslims in India would continue to press for a separate state, just as in Palestine he thought that there would be no more trouble after the removal of the British colonial administration. Gandhi's outlook today seems undoubtedly naïve. After the Second World War, he chided the Jews for turning to the United States and for using terrorism to drive the British out of Palestine. But for better or worse, Zionist terrorist methods proved to be effective. In India, the American journalist Louis Fischer observed that terrorism had knocked from Gandhi's hand his own weapon of non-violence.

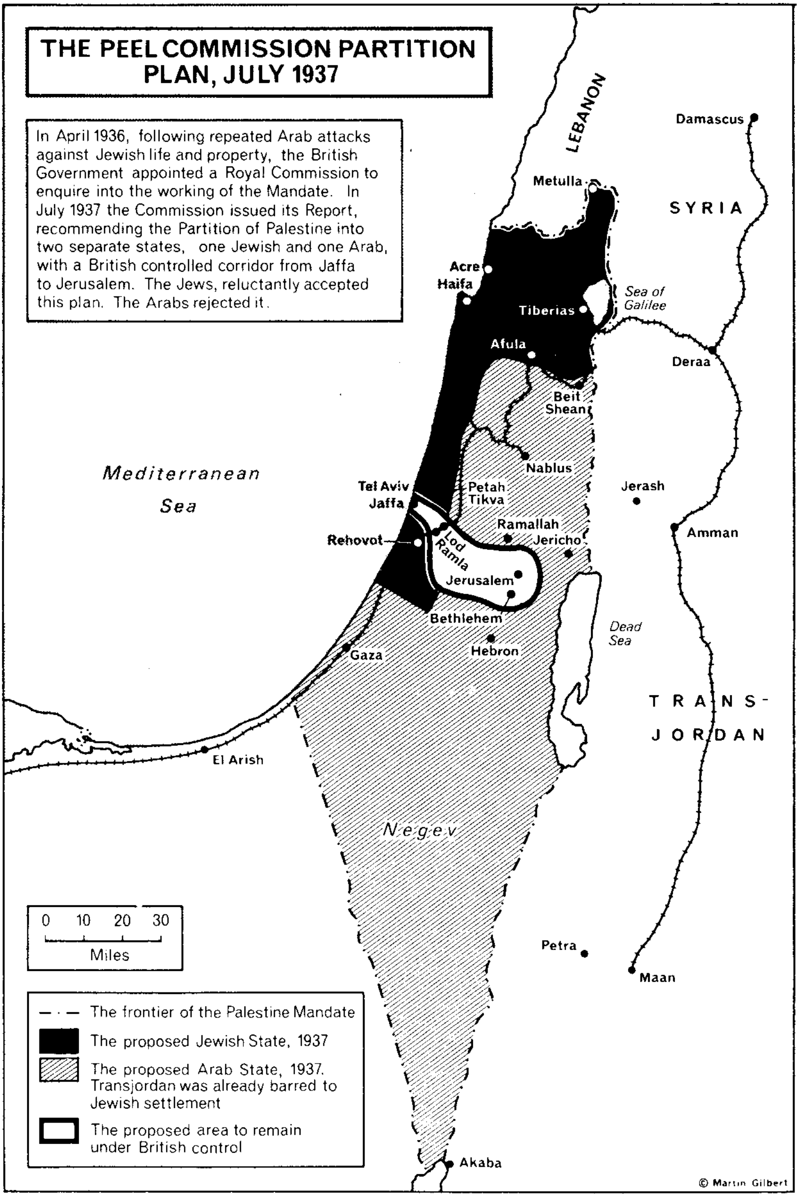
In the span of Gandhi's life, his attention to the problem of Palestine was but a fraction of the amount of time, energy, and contemplation that he dedicated, in his own phrase, to the sacred cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. Yet a close study of his thought on Palestine repays the effort. Simone Panter-Brick draws together scattered and fragmented evidence and makes sense of Gandhi's often contradictory and convoluted utterances.

She identifies two interwoven and consistent threads of thought. One is that Indian Muslims sympathized with the Arab cause. The other is that Gandhi's support of the Arabs would help keep Indian Muslims in the fold of the Indian National Congress. Yet Gandhi had a higher ethical purpose. He hoped that his own example of civil disobedience might fire the imagination of others. He remained an indefatigable non-violent warrior with a spiritual as well as a political lesson. The inspiration he gave to Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nelson Mandela is radiant testimony to his lasting influence. Gandhi's insistence that there must be alternatives to terrorism and violence is certainly as relevant today as in his own time. The enduring passion of his belief in non-violence is the compelling theme of Simone Panter-Brick's deft, Gallic assessment of Gandhi's moral stature.

Wm. Roger Louis
Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center
University of Texas at Austin



Map 1: Zones of British and French influence as agreed in 1916 (Sykes-Picot Agreement). Map adapted from The Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs.



MAP 2: Palestine in 1937. Map adapted from Martin Gilbert (2005) The Routledge Atlas of the Arab-Israeli Conflict.

Introduction

Focus on Palestine

Most unlikely people, most unlikely places make history.

The ancient trees, the beautiful, blue jacaranda trees that line the streets of PieterMarizburg, witnessed, one night, an incident at the station, that of a gentleman barrister thrown out of a first-class carriage by a sturdy ticket collector. It was a racial incident, not uncommon in the South Africa of the end of the 19th century. But the barrister was Mohandas Karamchad Gandhi.

The politics of non-violence sprang from that dark, obscure night, into a way of life that Professor Morris-Jones was to qualify as 'saintly politics'.

Gandhi loved the Arabs, Gandhi loved the Jews, and Gandhi loved the British – what a lovely recipe for tackling the problems in the Middle East! But lots of things about them – the Jews, the Arabs and the British – he did not like. However his likes and dislikes made him differentiate between what man is and what man does, so that one can still like the man while condemning his actions. To understand this is to find the key to Gandhi's relationship with Britain, and, perhaps also, logically enough, with the Middle East.

*

The span of Gandhi's political life in India matches that of the British Mandate in Palestine.

He surfaced to political life in India at the time of the Balfour Declaration. His assassination coincided with the ending of the Mandate. Gandhi had to deal at home with problems similar to those of Palestine, a parallel which is really as remarkable as it is unexpected. It goes a long way to explaining how and why the situation in Palestine became his own concern.

There is a parallel between the two countries, India and Palestine, in the rivalry and clash of religions, cultures, and political parties. There is a similarity of their respective minority-majority problems; of the breaking of imperial or mandatory ties; of their sensitivity to the issue of partition; and last, but not least, of the growing unrest with its sequel of riots and rebellion.

To those pressures and conflicts one must add a resemblance in the intervention of other states, meddling in their thorny situations. The United States, drawn into two world wars, were preaching Wilsonian ideas in the first, and decolonisation in the second, making their weight felt in Palestine, and in India. Strong Jewish lobbying was actively engaged to help with the creation of a Jewish home. The Arab states bordering Palestine were active in their support of their Muslim brothers.

India was no neighbour, but Muslim Indians were just as vocal as Arab Muslims in the defence of their Islamic heritage. In fact, their protest was loud and clear. More so, they had taken to jihad at the birth of the Mandate to keep Palestine out of British hands.

The story of Gandhi's involvement in Middle Eastern politics is essentially one of interweaving the problems of Muslim-Hindu relations in India and those of the Arabs and Jews in Palestine. It begins with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War and the jihad launched in defence of the Caliphate.

This jihad took on a non-violent character when they accepted as their leader a Hindu, Mohandas Gandhi. He made

the Caliphate cause India's cause. For the sake of Palestine he fought his first all-India campaign. This was how Gandhi's initiation into the politics of the erstwhile Ottoman Empire, of the newly designated Middle East, focused on Palestine.

*

As in a detective story, other aspects unfold from a study of Gandhi's opinions on the Middle East. A very touching and sentimental side emerges, so to say, out of the blue, to explain much of the Mahatma's contradictory statements on the subject, and to give – hopefully – a new insight into his demeanour.

1

The Enigma

This study of Gandhi's response to the conflict in Palestine led me, at first, along a well-known path. It led, chronologically, through three stages or periods.

The Palestine of the Caliph

In 1915 Gandhi had returned to India from South Africa, renowned for a very successful non-violent struggle (1906–1914) on behalf of his downtrodden countrymen. At the request of Gokhale, one of his most ardent Indian supporters, Gandhi had spent a year, silently observing the Indian political scene. Thus, in 1918, he was free, and indeed eager, to resume a non-violent campaign – a vocation to which he felt called. A cause lay to hand, the preservation of the Ottoman Caliph's jurisdiction over lands including Palestine, a cause for which Gandhi incredibly aroused the whole of India in 1920 against the Mandatory Power.

> We, both Hindus and Muslims, have now an opportunity of a lifetime. The Khilafat question will not recur for another 100 years.[1]

Through the Caliphate's claims, Gandhi became indirectly

involved with the land holy for Arabs, Jews and Christians. Because he did not question the religious claims of the Indian Muslims, his position then was clear, as he declared in March 1921 to the *Bombay Chronicle*:

> The existence of Islam demands the total abrogation of mandates taken by Britain and France. No influence, direct or indirect, over the Holy Places of Islam will ever be tolerated by Indian Muslims. It follows, therefore, that even Palestine must be under Muslim control. So far as I am aware, there never has been difficulty put in the way of the Jews and Christians visiting Palestine and performing all their religious rights. No canon, however, of ethics or war can possibly justify the gift by the Allies of Palestine to Jews.[2]

He later added:

> The Muslims claim Palestine as an integral part of Jazirat-ul-Arab. They are bound to retain its custody, as an injunction of the Prophet. But that does not mean that the Jews and the Christians cannot freely go to Palestine, or even reside there and own property. What non-Muslims cannot do is to acquire sovereign jurisdiction. The Jews cannot receive sovereign rights in a place which has been held for centuries by Muslim powers by rights of religious conquest. The Muslim soldiers did not shed their blood in the late war for the purpose of surrendering Palestine out of Muslim control. I would like my Jewish friends to impartially consider the position of the seventy million Muslims in India. As a free nation, can they tolerate what they must regard as a treacherous disposal of their sacred possession.[3]

The Jerusalem above

The collapse of the Caliphate movement and the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate by the Turks opened up a second stage. Gandhi appeared to be unconcerned with the Jewish claims on Palestine. In this period he tended to leave matters of foreign policy in the hands of Jawaharlal Nehru. Celestial Palestine, as this period may be called, was a time for non-involvement in foreign politics. He advised Jews, when asked, to look to the 'Jerusalem' above, namely a spiritual, not an actual home.

In London, which he visited in 1931 to attend a Round Table Conference on India, he declared to *The Jewish Chronicle*:

> I have a world of friends among the Jews . . . (They should) realize the Jerusalem that is within. Zionism meaning reoccupation of Palestine has no attraction for me. I can understand the longing of a Jew to return to Palestine, and he can do so if he can without the help of bayonets, whether his own or those of Britain. In that event he would go to Palestine peacefully and in perfect friendliness with the Arabs. The real Zionism of which I have given you my meaning is the thing to strive for, long for, and die for. Zion lies in one's heart. It is the abode of God. The real Jerusalem is the spiritual Jerusalem. Thus he can realize this Zionism in any part of the world.[4]

However Gandhi must have come down to earth in a conversation at this time, also in London, with the President of the World Zionist Congress, Sokolow. The latter, who replaced Weizmann for four years at the head of the Zionist organisation, reported to the Executive of the 18th Congress that Gandhi gave him a 'satisfactory declaration.'[5]

Intricacy of Gandhi's thought

The third period is set by the well-known statement by Gandhi on the Jews, that of *Harijan* (Gandhi's weekly journal), on the 26th of November 1939, where it is said that 'Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense as England belongs to the English and France to the French' – a statement apparently prescriptive, but implicitly factual – or is it vice-versa? It is also a very disconcerting statement because, only a few years later, he is quoted to have said quizzically: 'The Jews (in Palestine) have a good case', adding for full measure: 'They have a prior claim.'[6]

For this reason the third period could be called: *the enigmatic period*.

At this stage Gandhi leaves one puzzled. On one hand there is the prolix Gandhi of November 1938. On the other hand, before and after that date, there is an unusual Gandhi, tight-lipped, reluctant to express himself, cautiously on his guard, almost invariably prudent in his pronouncements. Deeply concerned, painfully so at times, nonetheless sometimes entirely detached from earthly contingencies. Inconsistent in fact, contradicting imperturbably a previous opinion.

Solving the enigma

There would appear to be a simple and satisfactory explanation. Gandhi revised his analysis and shifted his position in the light of events. He never felt bound by the logic of earlier pronouncements. Intellectual honesty obliged him to heed the promptings of his inner voice, and his astuteness made him sensitive to the strict requirements of circumstances.

He said as much himself:

> At the time of writing, I never think of what I have said before. My aim is not to be consistent with my previous

statements on a given question, but to be consistent with truth, as it may present itself to me at a given moment . . .

Whenever I have been obliged to compare my writing of even fifty years ago with the latest, I have discovered no inconsistency, between the two. But friends who observe inconsistency will do well to take the meaning that my latest writing may yield, unless they prefer the old. But before making the choice, they should try to see if there is not an underlying and abiding consistency between the two seeming inconsistencies . . .[7]

The secret move

The chronological approach does not suffice to explain Gandhi on Palestine. More prodding is necessary. Gandhi himself said so. For he is not some sort of weathercock, turning round with the wind. But there is a shroud of obscurity, a shroud of mystery, hanging over his attitude on Palestine that has to be explained. Is the key to be found in the hundred heavy volumes of the Collective Works of Mahatma Gandhi?

A supplementary volume, published in August 1994 – nearly half a century after Gandhi's death – revealed a treasure-trove, Gandhi's correspondence with a long standing friend, Hermann Kallenbach. To quote the Preface:

> A few years ago when the Government of India acquired a substantial collection of Gandhiji's letters to Hermann Kallenbach at an auction in South Africa, little did they realise that in the wealth thus brought home lay a whole invaluable new world of Gandhiji hitherto not glimpsed by historiographers.[8]

*

– Then, how is one to start this study?
– By being indifferent to the shining mirrors leading unsuspecting birds into the trap – that is the trap of a purely straightforward, chronological approach – and by resisting the temptation to categorize Gandhi as pro-this or anti-that.

This sphinx-like enigma is to be handled by asking a simple question: did Gandhi – apart from his trenchant comments on Palestine – ever do something positive to resolve the conflict between the Arabs and the Jews?

*

The surprising answer is: yes, he did.

It all happened in 1937, and it was meant to be top-secret.

2

Tree by Tree, Acre by Acre

Weizmann

Why was there such a knotty problem in the Palestine of 1937 to suddenly command Gandhi's attention and require his intervention?

It was the tangled aggregate of several ambiguous and contradictory agreements made during and immediately after the First World War, recipes and harbingers of future disasters.

The ambiguity of agreements on Palestine

Five agreements in four years! All dealing with Palestine. Britain was signatory to four of these; two concerned the Jews and two the Arabs, one the French, another the Muslims of India, everybody pulling his selfish way.

It was thus that Sir Henry MacMahon, High Commissioner in Egypt, in 1915 promised Hussein, Sharif of Mecca, an independent Arab kingdom.

The Sykes-Picot agreements of 1916 marked out British and French spheres of influence in the Middle East.

In November 1917 Arthur Balfour, British Foreign Secretary, solemnly promised the Jews a homeland in Palestine.

In January 1919 Faisal and Weizmann, Arab and Jew respectively, came to an agreement in English, a language that Faisal was said not to understand. Weizmann wore an Arab headdress

for the occasion – as is shown on the official photograph – and Faisal added a codicil to the document he signed – in Arabic – stipulating a prior condition, Arab independence.

Finally, Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, undertook not to dismember the temporal power of the Caliph over Palestine. The Indian Muslims believed that he gave the following assurance:

> Nor are we fighting to deprive Turkey of the rich and renowned lands of Asia Minor and Thrace which are predominantly Turkish in race.[1]

Everybody had their reasons for signing – adequate reasons, especially the British fighting a difficult war. Crucial was the Balfour Declaration, which in the words of Arnold J. Toynbee,

> . . . was the winning card in the sordid contest between two sets of belligerents in the first World War for winning the support of the Jews, in Germany, Austria-Hungary, and – most important of all – in the U.S.[2]

Equally important was the loyalty of the Indian Muslim soldiers in the Indian Army fighting the Ottoman Power. In some front lines they could hear the call to prayers over the enemy lines and wondered whether they were not on the wrong side in the war.

Likewise, there had to be some understanding with the French, ever-suspicious of British motives, and also, with the help of men like Lawrence of Arabia, some prospect for the Arabs of freedom from Ottoman rule.

The war having ended, the conflicting promises would have to be tackled, somehow or other. In fact, following the proclamation of a British Mandate in Palestine and in Iraq, and of a French Mandate in Syria and Lebanon, it seemed as if

Palestine had been promised several times over to different people, by one lacking the right of bestowal.

The Palestine of the Mandate

Palestine was at that time no more than a name for a land which had been freed from Ottoman rule: poor, pastoral, underdeveloped, feudal, ostensibly Arab in character, traditionally labelled Syrian, Jordanian, or simply Palestinian. It was only later that the word Palestinian took its present connotation, that is to say non-Jew. For many years, neighbouring Arab states eyed avidly Judea, Galilee, the banks of the Jordan and the Gulf of Aqaba. Conversely, for many years, some Jews and some Englishmen thought, and at times expressed the view, that its Arab inhabitants would be just as much at home on the other side of the Jordan, where they would find the same countryside, the same way of life, the same customs, the same religion.

It was not until the establishment of the British Mandate that Palestine took more definite shape, albeit with an uncertain future, given the ambiguities of so-called agreements.

For instance, the name Palestine was not mentioned specifically in the McMahon-Hussein agreement. It was later alleged, and ostensibly proven, that it was not in fact a part of the agreement, and that Sherif Hussein, the Hashemite ruler of Mecca, knew this very well.

The most crucial ambiguity lay in the Balfour Declaration. For Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, and for Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, Palestine was a land cut to measure out of biblical cloth, with which they were familiar from their school days. Nonetheless, they refrained from declaring it a Jewish State, a necessary precaution. It was to be a 'home' for Jews – an ambiguous term. Tom Segev points out that:

> The term *national home* made allusions to the Temple, because the Hebrew, *bayit,* is also traditionally used to refer to 'the House of God'.[3]

However, one thing was soon made clear: Palestine was not to straddle the river Jordan. The land east of the river was baptised Transjordan and entrusted to the war-time ally, Emir Abdullah, son of Hussein ibn Ali, the Hashemite Sherif of Mecca.

*

The promise of a national home for the Jews, was it or was it not the promise of a Jewish state?[4]

To answer this question became more difficult as the years went by. Two former Cabinet Ministers, Lloyd George and Churchill, were cross-questioned by the Peel Commission (1936–1937) 'about what they envisaged the future to be when the Mandate was secured.'

Said Lloyd George quite clearly to the Commissioners:

> . . . if the Jews had meanwhile responded to the opportunity afforded them by the idea of a National Home and had become a definite majority of the inhabitants, then Palestine would become a Jewish Commonwealth.[5]

Churchill expressed himself much more conditionally but to the same effect:

> The British Government had certainly committed itself to the idea that some day, somehow, far off in the future, subject to justice and economic convenience, there might well be a great Jewish State there, numbering millions, far exceeding the present inhabitants of the country . . . We never committed ourselves to making Palestine a Jewish State . . . but if more and more Jews gather to that Home

> and all is worked from age to age, from generation to generation, with justice and fair consideration to those displaced and so forth, certainly it was contemplated and intended that they might in the course of time become an overwhelming Jewish State.[6]

The Palestinian Arabs, slowly waking from their political slumber, took their time to perceive the threat. But Chaim Weizmann, the prominent Zionist leader, ever active, ever vigilant, knew what to do: he wanted to foster the return to Zion under British tutelage. The Balfour Declaration would deliver the baby.

'Dr. Weizmann, it's a boy!'[7], he was told at the end of that fateful November 1917 Cabinet meeting. His idea of what sort of boy he wanted came out at his meeting with Balfour one year later (12th of April 1918), when he said to the Foreign Secretary:

> . . . a community of four to five million Jews in Palestine would be a sufficiently sound economic basis . . . this presupposes free and unfettered development of the Jewish National Home in Palestine . . . we should be able to settle in Palestine four to five million Jews within a generation and so make Palestine a Jewish country . . . [8]

This was to be an uphill task but this indefatigable Zionist, 'chief ambassador, propagandist and tax collector'[9], all in one, set to it resolutely in the years preceding 1937. This is how he expressed himself at the 17th Zionist Congress in Basle (30th of June 1931):

> Yet another dunam, yet another few trees, another cow, another goat, and two more houses . . . If there is another way of building a house, save brick by brick, I don't know it . . . If there is another way of building a country save

> dunam by dunam, man by man, and farmstead by farmstead – again I do not know it.[10]

The key period of 1937

Until 1937 Gandhi was blissfully unconcerned by the build-up of the problem in Palestine. The Caliphate days having gone, and with them the Hindu-Muslim alliance and amity with the Caliphatist leaders, the brothers Mohamed and Shaukat Ali, Gandhi had no further reason to get involved.

He became fully engaged in domestic issues, the pursuit of independence, the uplifting of the poor, the promotion of spinning and weaving indigenous cotton (khadi), the strengthening of Hindu-Muslim unity, basic education, the eradication of untouchability, and education in non-violence.

In India, there was no Jewish problem. The Jews were few – 25,000 in 1930 – mainly in Bombay, happily engaged in finance and other professions, apolitical. No anti-Semitic ill-feeling made them unwelcome. They had no reason and no will to return to the land of their ancestors. Their connection with Palestine took mainly the form of a contribution to the Zionist fund. They had made their home in India.

> In at least one country in the world, Jews can exist with pride and honour.[11]

*

Yet, Gandhi, before the Second World War, suddenly became concerned with the situation in Palestine, in a secretive kind of way.

His secretary, Pyarelal Nayar, knew his secret. After Gandhi's death, when he was interviewed in the seventies by Ved Mehta, for his book, *Gandhi and his Apostles,* he was still sorting out the



FIGURE 1: Pyarelal (centre), Gandhi's secretary, with the Mahatma and Madeleine Slade (known as Mirabehn, Gandhi's 'adopted daughter'), at the time of the Round Table Conference in London, 1931.

Mahatma's papers for the Collected Works. Mentioning the papers, Pyarelal said in conversation with Mehta:

> – . . . However, there are some materials I have decided to suppress.
> – Such as what', I (Mehta) ask.
> – 'Gandhi's views on Israel, for a start', he says with a mysterious air.
>
> I am able to suppress them from history, since by God's grace I am the only one who knows about them.[12]

Truthfully, Pyarelal, was the last one in the know. The few others who also knew would not speak. They were dead.

3

Palestine to the Arabs

Gandhi

Pyarelal was obviously not referring to Gandhi's statement in *Harijan* of 26th of November 1938, 'Palestine belongs to the Arabs', because that statement[1] had nothing secret or mysterious about it. It pleased the Arabs and angered the Jews. It appeared to be handing down a verdict. Is this so?

While this pronouncement continues the pro-Arab line taken in earlier years and can be read, especially by Jews, as a rejection of Weizmann's policy 'tree by tree, dunam by dunam', it is, however, only by placing it in a wider context, that it can be accurately assessed – if not watered down.

That context is four-fold. First, Nehru's preeminence in the formulation of policy on matters such as Palestine; secondly, Gandhi's total opposition to partition; thirdly, Gandhi's close association with a Pathan, Abdul Ghaffar Khan; finally, the example of Indian and South African Indian minorities as a frame of reference for the solution of the Jewish minority problem.

Seen in this four-fold context, Gandhi's statement is to be considered more an aphorism requiring further elucidation rather than a verdict loaded in the Arabs' favour.

Nehru's pro-Arabism

Of first importance is the Indian political context and in

particular the exclusive prominence of Nehru in the formulation of foreign policy, such as the Palestinian issue. His was the dominant voice, accepted by Gandhi and by the Indian National Congress. His attitude was essentially nationalistic, anti-imperialistic, and ineluctably simplistic.

> The Mandatory system is, I think, a very dangerous idea, because it covers a bad thing under a fair name.[2]

It came down to saying: India is fighting for the end of British rule; likewise in Palestine, radical Arabs contest the British mandate. Same opponent, same struggle, same objective.

Nehru believed in an organic connexion between world events. In his Presidential Address at the 50th session of the Indian National Congress at Faizpur, in December 1936, he declared:

> The Arab struggle against British Imperialism in Palestine is as much part of this great world conflict as India's struggle for freedom.[3]

Moreover, Nehru held that there cannot coexist two nationalist movements struggling on the same ground against the same opponent. For just as the Indian National Congress claimed pre-eminence and exclusiveness in expressing the aspirations of all the different communities of India, Arabs could claim to be the only acceptable standard-bearer for anti-mandate forces. Hence Nehru's pro-Arabism and that of Congress.

Thus 'Palestine is to the Arabs' what India is to the Indians – as represented by the Indian National Congress.

The scare of partition

Secondly, came the rub: just as there were Palestinian Jews

unwilling to accept Arab majority rule, there were to be objections on the part of Indian Muslims to the prospect of a government controlled by Congress and dominated by a Hindu majority.

The leader of these Indian Muslims was Mohamed Ali Jinnah. He had had a chequered career as an Indian nationalist, in and out of Congress, in and out of India (several years in London in legal practice), in and out of the Muslim League, and in politics again for good in 1935, to lead this small and modest political party, as it was then, to a spectacular rise. In opposition to Congress, Jinnah, the erstwhile convinced secularist, and believer in Hindu-Muslim unity, led the League to embrace the notion of a 'land of the Pure', a notion put forward by a Cambridge student, Rahmat Ali, in 1934.

'Pakistan' – P for Punjab; A for Afghania (North-West Frontier); K for Kashmir; S for Sind; Tan for Baluchistan – was the making of Jinnah's spectacular political career, strikingly similar to that of Gandhi on the back of the Caliphate issue in 1920. Pakistan and the Caliphate provided the launch pad for the remarkable and swift ascent of these two men, Gandhi and Jinnah, so different in their mode of dress, and so determined to prevail, not over one another, but in a clash of objectives.

The possibility that the Muslims of India under Jinnah's leadership would favour partition matched, by an extraordinary coincidence, the possibility of partition being likewise imposed on Palestine, as the Peel Commission, reporting in 1937, had recommended.

Gandhi, horrified by the threat of 'vivisection' at home, could not but refuse for Palestine a solution which would tear apart a land and its inhabitants. What Gandhi refused for his own people, could he in all logic recommend for others?

Thus, Palestine to the Arabs: no vivisection was allowed.

The ideal Arab: the non-violent Pathan

Thirdly, weighing alongside Nehru and Jinnah was the influence of a remarkable man, referred to as the 'Gandhi of the Frontier'. Abdul Ghaffar Khan was a Muslim, and a 'proud Arab', as Gandhi loved to say, that is one of the tall, fearsome and fearless Pathan of the North-West Frontier that borders Afghanistan. Converted to non-violence, he formed under his command a small non-violent 'army', the Red Shirts, all of them Muslim, brave and devoted to their clan.

Strong links existed between the two Gandhis, not only those of friendship and mutual esteem, but also as leading members of Congress, Ghaffar Khan being a member of its Working Committee. It was perhaps as much his respect for Khan's pro-Arab sympathies as acceptance of Nehru's pro-Arab stance that prompted Gandhi's own pronouncement – Palestine to the Arabs.

The Jewish problem: a minority problem

Finally, and perhaps decisively, Gandhi set store by his own experience with two vulnerable minorities, first in South Africa and later in India. In South Africa it had been possible to force the authorities to lift unacceptable discriminations newly imposed on the Indian community. In India itself, he was active on behalf of the Untouchables (albeit with only partial success).

The example of the Untouchables is particularly relevant: had not Gandhi called the Jews 'the Untouchables of Christianity?'[4] He rejected a reform of the electoral law which would have given the Untouchables their own electoral roll and separate representation. This reform, championed by Dr. Ambedkar, himself an untouchable, was aired, with Gandhi present, at the 1931 Round Table Conference on India in London. The British

Prime Minister having decided in favour of the reform – the McDonald Award – Gandhi, in protest, started a fast unto death. To him, the Award was equivalent to casting out the untouchables from Hinduism. He won his point, Ambedkar agreeing.

This episode illustrates the priority given by Gandhi to political cohesion. A polity, however diverse in its composition, must endeavour to be all-inclusive. If Palestine was for the Arabs it was not to mean that the Arabs of Palestine could dominate the Jews in Palestine. The Jews had their place – nolens volens – in their country of residence, be it India, Palestine – or Germany!

Hidden in the statement 'Palestine to the Arabs' is a two-fold corollary: first, Palestine – likewise Germany – was a host country of which Jews formed an integral part – just as the Untouchables were of India; secondly there are effective means of fighting any attempted discrimination – as Gandhi had demonstrated in South Africa. The comparison with England and France ('Palestine belongs to the Arabs as England to the English and France to the French'[5]) is a reference to a norm, which in Palestine had still to be established (and re-established in Germany).

After all, who are these English and these French? Scots, Celts, Anglo-Saxons and Normans, in the one case; Gauls, Romans, Greeks, Normans and Germanic tribes, in the other; not to mention the flux of more recent immigrants surfing the wave of decolonization.

One could ask the same question of the Palestinian Arabs themselves: Bedouins, Syrians, Jordanians, Egyptians . . . Some of them Christians. Why then not also Jews? In a 'Palestine to the Arabs'?

*

The Jews, however, had been encouraged to adopt a different approach. At the time of the Balfour Declaration, Lord Robert Cecil, Balfour's deputy, declared the wishes of the British Government to be 'Arabia for the Arabs and Judaea for the Jews', suggesting the possibility of a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine.[6]

> Our wish (the British Government's) is that Arabian countries shall be for the Arabs, Armenia for the Armenians, and Judaea for the Jews.[7]

Weizmann wanted Palestine to be as Jewish as England is English and France is French.

*

The furore following Gandhi's pronouncement, 'Palestine to the Arabs,' made him more cautious in the future. He refused to endorse 'Asia for the Asiatics', as he was invited to do by a Japanese Member of Parliament, Mr. Takaoka, in December 1938:

> I do not subscribe to the doctrine Asia for Asiatics, if it is meant as an anti-European combination . . . How can we have Asia for Asiatics, unless we are content to let Asia remain a frog in the well?[8]

*

Although the foregoing contextual analysis may correct the impression that Gandhi was purely and simply pro-Arab, this was, however, the way it was understood at the time – and even much later. The fact that Gandhi did very little to correct this impression suggests that it suited his own purpose, namely his efforts to keep Muslims within the Congress fold, despite Jinnah's growing popularity. Gandhi constantly weighed in the

balance, when dealing with Palestine, the fact that the Indian Muslims were committed to the Arab cause. 'Palestine belongs to the Arabs' was music to their ears.

Just how far Gandhi appeared to be deaf to the Jewish case is illustrated by the reaction of a learned Professor who had come to India in 1936 especially to brief Gandhi on the Jewish standpoint. This was a Dr. Olsvanger, a specialist in philology and Sanskrit, a Jew and a Zionist. The meeting took place, but Olsvanger, finding Gandhi disagreeably negative, even antipathetic, departed, his task unfulfilled. He spoke of his experience in disparaging terms, calling Gandhi in Yiddish 'ein Lämmel!'[9], namely, a 'little lamb', a simpleton, an innocent.

4

Briefing the Mahatma on Palestine

In contacting Gandhi, Dr. Olsvanger was not undertaking a purely personal visit. He had been sent by the Jewish Agency and, on his return to Palestine, duly reported his unfavourable conclusions.

The Political Department of the Jewish Agency

At the end of the First World War the Jewish Agency had been made a partner to the British Administration. Its task, specified in Article 4 of the Mandate, was that of 'advising and cooperating with the Administration of Palestine in such economic, social and other matters as may effect the establishment of the Jewish national home and the interests of the Jewish population in Palestine and, subject always to the control of the Administration, to assist and take part in the development of the country.'

The Jewish Agency took full advantage of this authorization. Its internal organization largely matched that of the British Administration. It concerned itself with external relations, security, trade unions and employment, taxation and the funding of social assistance, the purchase of land, education at all levels including the establishment of a university inaugurated by Churchill, and basic infrastructural matters such as irrigation. Three of its achievements illustrate the mastery of this so-called

advisory body – the revival of Hebrew as the national language, the organization of a Jewish labour force to lessen dependence upon strike-prone Arabs, and the creation of the Haganah, the military arm that was to protect the Jews in times of trouble.

The Mandate, in its Article 4, had stipulated that 'the Zionist organization' be 'recognized as such Agency.' It became more broadly representative of Jewish opinion when, in 1929, room was made for other parties and organisations, some socialist, others religious in character. Its outstanding leaders were David Ben Gurion and Maurice Shertok, both destined to hold high office in an independent Israel. The former, chairman of the Jewish Agency, became Israel's first Prime Minister. The latter, in charge of the Agency's Political Department, became the Minister of Foreign Affairs (having changed his name to Moshe Sharett – a change of name, to a more Jewish sounding one, being not unusual at that time). Located in Jerusalem, the Jewish Agency kept a close watch on developments in Palestine itself, while being kept informed of opinion in Whitehall and Westminster by its branch in London where Chaim Weizmann was in charge.

Weizmann, who was chosen to be Israel's first President, had settled in England in 1904. He had come to the notice of the British Government during World War I. His work as a scientist in Manchester had resulted in the development of a new kind of explosive, acetone.[1] This propelled him to the attention of the Minister of Munitions, Lloyd George, subsequently at the War Office and Prime Minister. From science, Weizmann turned to diplomacy, and, gaining the ear of political leaders such as Balfour and Lloyd George, became the main representative and advocate of Zionism in London and, for the Jewish Agency, the most reliable agent and interpreter of London's standpoint. As Lloyd George put it:

> Acetone converted me to Zionism.[2]

The main office in Jerusalem and the office in London did not always agree on policy. Ben Gurion in 1935 remarked: ‘speaking of official policy, one should distinguish between Chaim’s policies and mine and Moshe’s’.[3]

Colonial Office versus Foreign Office

Policies also diverged inside the British Government between pro-Arabs and pro-Jews. The former were vocal in the India Office and the Foreign Office; the latter were mostly found in the Colonial Office.

By the mid-thirties, the balance between pro and anti Zionists was changing in response to the deterioration in the broader international situation. The closer the threat of war, the more influential the Foreign Office became. Whereas the Colonial Office was committed to the establishment of a Jewish home in Palestine, the Foreign Office was primarily concerned with maintaining good relations with Arab States, whose support would be vital in the event of war. The Foreign Office was therefore more inclined to appease the Arab standpoint on Palestine, especially the standpoint of Egypt and Iraq. So was the War Office.

The political situation before World War II is summed up by Wm. Roger Louis in *Imperialism at Bay*:

> There existed two types of British Empire in the Middle East. The formal dependent empire of the Colonial Office consisted of the Mandate of Palestine and Transjordan. The other was the informal empire of the Foreign Office, which rested on treaty relations with the Arab states, notably Egypt and Iraq. Here then is a direct contrast between formal and informal empires, complicated by one overriding consideration, the future of Palestine. The Foreign Office officials tended to be pro-Arab and anti-

Zionist, while the Colonial officials, if not pro-Zionist, were certainly less pro-Arab.[4]

Zionist missions to India

The Political Department of the Jewish Agency had at its disposal funds for making more widely known the yishuv, the aspirations of the Jewish people in Palestine. But it was only in the mid-thirties that Shertok turned his attention to India – a tardy recognition of India's political importance, given its size and its prospects of independent status. The mission, that of contacting Jawaharlal Nehru and Gandhi in India, was entrusted to Olsvanger, a specialist in Sanskrit and philology.

It so happened that Immanuel Olsvanger hailed from South Africa, where Gandhi had started his political career. While discussing his visit to India with Shertok, Olsvanger mentioned that two Jewish friends of the charismatic Indian barrister had been of considerable assistance in his first non-violent political campaign in South Africa (1906–1914): Hermann Kallenbach, a German architect, two years younger than Gandhi, who emigrated to South Africa in 1896, and Henry S. L. Polak, a fellow Jew, an assistant in Gandhi's office.

They had helped organize in November 1913 the illegal crossing from Natal to the Transvaal by over two thousand destitute Indian 'coolies' as they were then known in South Africa. This 'Epic March', sometimes known as the 'invasion', led to the arrest of the 'coolie-barrister' and that of the two lone Europeans. They were sentenced to several months' imprisonment and jailed. Some of their flock of 'coolies' regrouped in Tolstoï Farm, which had recently been purchased by Kallenbach and put at the disposal of Gandhi. The Farm still stands, a silent witness to this episode.

Olsvanger knew Kallenbach; they were both officials of the South African Zionist Federation. Kallenbach had been a member

from 1913. He was appointed to its Executive twenty years later and also became a member of the General Campaign Committee of the Keren Hayesod, the Palestine Foundation Fund.

*

The original idea, to send Olsvanger to India, was thus amended to include Kallenbach. In July 1936, he received a letter, quite as mysterious as unexpected, from the head of the Jewish Agency's Political Department:

> You are in a unique position to help Zionism in a field where the resources of the Jewish people are so meagre as to be practically inexistent.[5]

Kallenbach replied positively, happy to have an opportunity of seeing Gandhi, happy also to be of assistance to the Palestinian Jews. His business had prospered in the intervening years and he had moved closer to Zionism, and, in fact, he was envisaging joining a kibbutz, drawn by a similarity with Gandhian ideals. But he warned Shertok about his limits:

> I am a man of ordinary intelligence, past 65 years, devoted the last 22 years almost entirely to technical and commercial pursuits.[6]

The architect not being immediately available, it was decided that the linguist should precede him to India.

Thus it was Olsvanger, on his own, who disembarked in Bombay on the 12th of October 1936 and who, on his return to Palestine in November 1936, reported having spent twenty minutes with 'ein Lämmel.'[7]

*

Olsvanger's disparaging remarks about Gandhi were too

outlandish to be given much credence. His brief contact with Nehru having also proved unhelpful, Shertok had perforce to place his hopes on Kallenbach.

Meanwhile valuable time was being lost.

Throughout the months which had elapsed since the Jewish Agency's initial approach to Kallenbach, the situation in Palestine had deteriorated. In April 1936 a general strike had been declared, resulting in loss of life. The revolt was eventually called off in October 1936 under strong and persuasive pressure from neighbouring Arab states.

Nonetheless Kallenbach was taking his time.

He had not joined Olsvanger in India in October 1936 as first intended. Not until April 1937 was a meeting held in London, attended by Shertok, Olsvanger, Kallenbach and also Weizmann, to give the go-ahead to Kallenbach's mission. There was still no sense of urgency, for Kallenbach stopped over in Palestine to meet Shertok, buy some land, and visit some kibbutzim.

These successive delays – a waste of precious time – call to mind the story of Louis XVI's flight from Versailles at the time of the French Revolution: the choice of vehicle – a heavy Berline carriage; the stop for a royal picnic, served on plates of gold no doubt, which then had to be washed in the stream; the failure of the cavalry, sent from Germany to meet the royal fugitives, to find the ford where they could have crossed the river; and the chance recognition of the king who had imprudently shown his face at the window of the carriage – which was to cost him his head.

Kallenbach, like the king, was unaware how time was running out – like the sand in an hour-glass.

*

The Kallenbach who finally landed in Bombay at the end of May 1937 had, in background and appearance, very little in common with Gandhi. He had grown up in Memel, a Prussian

town bordering Lithuania. An athletic, tireless walker, an accomplished tennis player, a champion ice-skater, he was as upright morally as he was physically.

The story is told that Kallenbach was present when Gandhi received a German visitor, a Captain Strunk, one of Hitler's followers. When the Nazi began to denounce the Jews, Gandhi interrupted, and impishly introduced Kallenbach who, bare-breasted, was sitting cross-legged on the floor:

> Here is a live Jew and a German Jew, if you please. He was a hot pro-German during the war.[8]

Thus confounded, the Nazi visitor confessed to having been mistaken, and took his leave.

The outstanding friendship between Lower and Upper House[9]

Of all Gandhi's cherished friends, Kallenbach was, without doubt, the one closest to Gandhi's heart. The Indian appreciated the German's gift for organization, his devotion, his sense of discipline, his acceptance of instructions and his amazing resourcefulness. He was for Gandhi the ideal companion, congenial, indispensable, irreplaceable, as in the song:

> Ich hatte einen Kameraden
> Einen bessten findst du ni't . . .
> Als waere's ein Stück von mir.
>
> I had a comrade
> A better one you won't find . . .
> T'was as if part of me.

They were bound together in deep friendship, by the hardship endured together, by satisfaction in what they had achieved in

South Africa, by a sentiment of having, like veterans, fought side by side.

Gandhi characterized the junction of their lives in Hindu fashion, as the rebirth of a previous existence. Kallenbach was devastated when life and war tore them apart:

> I feel lonely, very lonely in Jo(hannes)burg, like an abandoned dog. You have spoiled my life and showing me real friendship, affection and love, and I am vainly seeking for it.[10]

Of all Gandhi's correspondents Kallenbach had been the most devoted. Jokingly they took to addressing one another as Upper House (Gandhi) and Lower House (Kallenbach), their complementary roles reminding them of the relationship between the House of Lords and the House of Commons. Their correspondence fills one whole volume of Gandhi's Collected Works – incomplete, very few of Kallenbach's letters having been preserved.

One letter, which Margaret Chatterjee compares to Bach's 'sublime' aria, *Bist Du bei mir*, is very moving:

> One day, if I am permitted, I want you to give me a small modest corner in your Ashram, i.e. if I feel that I can be useful there and no disturbance and if you are still there, I would like to die there near you.[11]

*

In disembarking in Bombay in May 1937 Kallenbach was catching up on a long involuntary separation dating back to 1915. Kallenbach's invaluable contribution to the Natal-Transvaal March had united the two men so closely that, when Gandhi decided to return to India for good, just before war was declared, Kallenbach, a bachelor, decided to settle in India.



FIGURE 2: Hermann Kallenbach and Gandhi (front row) in 1910, at Tolstoy Farm, bought by Kallenbach during the South African Satyagraha Campaign (1906–1914).

Alas, united by a common cause in Africa, they were separated by war in Europe.

They had arranged to travel together to India via Britain, but left before Kallenbach had had the time to obtain a South African passport. Having arrived in London on a German passport, just as war was declared, and failing, despite Gandhi's endeavour, to obtain a visa for entry into India, he found himself marooned in Britain and eventually interned in the Isle of Man for the duration of the war.

Kallenbach's plans to settle in India with Gandhi were thus postponed sine die. But 'man proposes and God disposes'. Kallenbach was indeed to set foot in India, two decades later, on Shertok's prompting.

*

Indifferent to the splendours of India, shunning the tourist track, he hurried to see his spiritual guide from olden days. From Bombay he went straight to Tithal, where Gandhi was temporarily recuperating by the seaside. Reunited, they left for the harsher climate of Wardha, in central India, and the nearby village of Segaon, where Gandhi had founded a new ashram in 1935.

The month they spent there was like a dream come true.

Preaching Zionism to Gandhi

It also allowed Kallenbach to fulfill his mission.

Gandhi had sowed in him the ideals of detachment and of a simple life; it was now his turn to implant in Gandhi sympathy for the Zionist aspirations. Oddly, Gandhi appeared not to be familiar with these. The Jews he had known had not been Zionists or practicing Jews – may even have been skeptics. Gandhi had met them when attending the meetings of theosophists, in London and in South Africa. Some had assisted

Gandhi in his work as a barrister, notably the devoted secretary, Miss Schlesin, and Henri Polak, his clerk. Only once had he entered a synagogue. The reading of the Old Testament bored him stiff. Thus, although Gandhi knew and esteemed many Jews, he remained unaware of their beliefs and customs.

For Kallenbach it was a tremendous task, but one he pursued with great zeal. He obtained from Gandhi a promise to study the Zionist literature with an open mind – as friendship demanded. Subsequent correspondence reveals clearly that Gandhi kept his promise.

*

– Did Gandhi do more than make a promise of that sort?
– Yes.

It was a proposal which he made verbally to Kallenbach at the beginning of July 1937. Kallenbach was to transmit it to Shertok together with a short written statement.

It was more than Shertok had hoped for, and also more than he had bargained for.

5

Palestine in 1936

What Shertok had been seeking from Gandhi was a public endorsement of the Jewish case.

An unqualified endorsement he never would nor could secure.

The Balfour Declaration

The Jewish case rested, not entirely, but substantially, on a series of decisions taken by colonial powers, hence was tainted and unacceptable to Gandhi. It rested primarily on the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which had envisaged the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine – the precursor, for Balfour himself and for many others, of a Jewish state.

Rarely was so short a document (which did not mention any political rights) to have such tremendous political consequences and cause so many troubles in the years to come. It ran thus:

> Foreign Office
> November 2nd, 1917
>
> Dear Lord Rothschild,
>
> I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

> 'His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.'
>
> I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.
>
> Yours sincerely, Arthur James Balfour

Balfour himself, in private, at a Jewish luncheon on the 7th of February 1917, made no secret of what he had in mind:

> My personal hope is that the Jews will make good in Palestine and eventually found a Jewish State. It is up to them now; we have given them their great opportunity.[1]

He seems to have turned a blind eye to any future problems, indeed to have dealt with Palestine as if it were simply a backwater of Ottoman rule, and to have dismissed its Arab inhabitants as irrelevant. This is how he expressed himself at the time:

> Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-old traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who inhabit that ancient land.[2]

Gandhi's rejection of the Mandate

It made little or no difference to Gandhi that the League of Nations had endorsed the Balfour Declaration in virtually

identical terms, and indeed had, by specifically incorporating it in the Mandate, converted a mere promise into a binding commitment. Its Preamble stated that:

> the Mandatory should be responsible for putting into effect the declaration . . . in favour of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non- Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country . . .
>
> (Article 2) . . . secure the establishment of the Jewish national home . . . safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all inhabitants.

The mandate system was itself suspect in Gandhi's eyes. It had simply recognized the existence in the Middle East of four zones of influence, under the aegis of two colonial powers (Palestine and Mesopotamia to Great-Britain; Syria and Lebanon to France). Three of the four soon made political progress towards independence, but Palestine trailed behind.

For Gandhi there could be no compromise with such tutelage and dependence. Was he not fighting against it in his own country as witnessed the non-violent campaigns of the 1920s and 1930s? It would have been totally contradictory on his part had he in any way associated himself with an enterprise so clearly dependent on colonial patronage.

The yishuv was going from strength to strength, but it nonetheless remained dependent on the British Administration for many matters such as immigration and overall security. It needed the help of Britain, if ever it was to achieve parity with the Arabs.

The fact that for the Jews of Palestine parity of representation was a vital issue, whereas it was for Gandhi a distracting

irritant, illustrates most vividly what effectively inhibited Gandhi from making any public statement on Palestine. Gandhi – facing and soon to be overtaken by Muslim demands for separatism in his own country – was inclined to dismiss the apprehension of Muslim or Jewish minorities as mistaken. They were in essence the artificial creations of the colonial power's policy of divide and rule. They would disappear, so to say overnight, with the dismissal of the colonial power.

It was a view shared by Nehru, according to whom:

> As the idea of Moslem nationalism was fabricated with British encouragement in India, so also the idea of Zionism was fabricated by British Imperialism in Palestine.[3]

It was not a view shared by Shertok and his fellow Jews.

They were a minority whose rights were safe provided they were in the hands of the British Administration, even if one of the hands, that of the Foreign Office – and likewise the India Office – was considered pro-Arab. The dependence of the Jews upon the colonial power was clearly demonstrated in the two stages of the 1936–9 Rebellion, which obliged Britain to send to Palestine as many as 30,000 troops under the command of men such as Wavell and Montgomery.

Arab resistance and British response

While the Jews were implementing and organizing the return to Zion, the Arab population watched, at first helplessly, before building up their resistance to the waves of immigrants taking over their land, however beneficial in economic terms.

Contesting the building of a Jewish homeland was to be an uphill struggle for the Arabs. Awakened from age-long sleep under Ottoman rule by the Balfour Declaration, it took them a whole year to register a protest, and many more years to become

a force strong enough to make the British Administration take notice – a transformation reflected in that of the word ‘Palestinian’.

It had traditionally referred to anyone living in Palestine, whether Muslim, Jew or Christian – a Palestine which until the creation of the Mandate had no precise boundaries. It referred to individuals, to this or that person. It needed the threat of a Jewish homeland to prompt the change of usage, to refer to a people engaged collectively in a political struggle. An American journalist, Steven Erlanger, gave Yasser Arafat the credit for having brought about this change:

> a man who turned Palestinian from an adjective that included anyone who lived in the British Mandate for Palestine to a specific appellation for a people.[4]

*

Neighbouring states were only too keen to intervene in the affairs of the Palestinians, as if they were their own concern, and for motives that were not unselfish. The British Government, likewise, tended to give more weight to their views than to those of the Palestinians themselves. There was also some talk of a ‘Greater Syria’, for instance, a vision commented on by the British Colonial Secretary at the League of Nations on the 13th of August 1937. He told the Commission that the Arabs of Palestine did not consider themselves as ‘Palestinians’, but as a part of Syria, a part of the Arab world.

*

The people in question, for the most part Muslim, had still to be weaned from this Ottoman way of life – quasi-feudal in its clientist foundations, an ‘acephalous’ society according to Elie Kedourie[5]. The poor worked the land, on behalf of owners, often absent and invariably rich. Artisans and traders constituted a

middle class. Longstanding family rivalries divided society into the followers of the al-Husseinis, Nashashibis, al-Khalidis, Abd al-Hadis, al-Dajjanis, and others . . . Characteristic of the time were clannish divisions and intrigues, the absence of representative institutions, the fluctuating nature of numerous political parties – in short the lack of a charismatic leader. Even as late as 1936, each of the three of the leading families had its own political party.

It was quite in vain that the British High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel, himself a Jew, offered, in a spirit of fair play, to set up an Arab Agency which would speak for the Arabs, just as the Jewish Agency did for the Jews. He had envisaged a three-fold contribution: that of the British, in charge overall, but only temporarily; the second, Jewish, for the creation of a national home; and the third, Arab, to facilitate dialogue and democracy. The offer was rejected out of hand.

Following Arab rejections of Samuel's proposals, two bodies, representing Arab factions, came to be established: a Supreme Muslim Council and a Palestinian Arab Executive. The latter was presided by a member of the Husseini family. Hadj Amin al Husseini, the head of the Husseinis, was appointed to the office of Mufti and given the title of Grand Mufti (an innovation invented for the occasion, according to Kedourie[6]) and a member of the Nashashibi clan was appointed Mayor of Jerusalem.

The British soon had cause to regret their choice of Grand Mufti, an appointment for life. Hadj Amin played a double game: benevolently smiling with one eye, while giving a murderous look with the other; putting one foot in the High Commissioner's Residence, while keeping the other in step with the Nazis. He formed in 1935 his own political party, the Palestinian Arab Party. The Nashashibis, more moderate, and secretly funded by the Jewish Agency, had theirs: the National Defence Party.

No one leader had yet emerged, nor had any organisation comparable to the highly efficient Jewish Agency. Nevertheless,

in one respect, Arabs were united, namely in their hatred of Zionism and their rejection of the British Mandate.

*

The Arabs soon learnt that the most effective way to bring pressure to bear on the British Administration was to riot. The riots of April 1920 and May 1921, although not very serious, were soon to be followed by an important restatement of British policy.

A White Paper, issued by Churchill, then Colonial Secretary, in 1922, dealt with three issues: Transjordan, the Balfour Declaration and immigration. First, Transjordan was declared to be separate from Palestine. Second, the Balfour Declaration was not to be interpreted as promising the Jews Palestine as their national home, but a national home in Palestine, a subtle and important distinction. Finally, Jewish immigration was not to outstrip the capacity of the economy to absorb the immigrants. Quotas were fixed by the British Administration, in agreement with the Jewish Agency.

The number of Jewish immigrants fluctuated from year to year; 8,000 in 1923; 14,000 in 1924; 34,000 in 1925. They settled on state land, on deserted land, on desert which bloomed and bore fruit. They drained marsh land, as did the monks of earlier days in Europe. The work was hard, the earth often infertile, and there was no escaping the collapse of the world economy at the end of the 1920s.

Like a soufflé, immigration dropped spectacularly – from 14,000 in 1926 to 2,000 in 1928. In the latter year the numbers leaving Palestine (5,071) exceeded those arriving – a unique occurrence.

*

There was renewed rioting in 1929, in Jerusalem. The observation of some unusual behaviour on the part of Jews who came to pray at the Wailing Wall was sufficient to instil the suspicion

that the Jews intended to rebuild their Temple – the third – in place of the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosque. It was all too easy an opportunity for the Grand Mufti and his followers to exploit.

In the wake of the rioting – and a high death toll – came new concessions to the Arabs, in the form of a White Paper, known as the Passfield White Paper. This would have set limits both to immigration and the purchase of land. Weizmann, however, thanks to his London connections, was able to obtain from the Prime Minister, Ramsay McDonald, a written assurance effectively setting aside the White Paper's proposals. It became known as 'the Black Letter' for the Arabs.

The new trend of Jewish immigration

There were, broadly speaking, two kinds of immigrants, those – an unquantified minority – who were self-sufficient, having the necessary skills and resources to look after themselves, and those who needed to be housed and placed in work. The annual quota, as jointly agreed by the British Administration and the Jewish Agency, restricted the latter but not the former.[7]

Immigration resurged in the 1930s, due to a calmer atmosphere in Palestine itself, to the world's recovery from the Great Depression, and to a wave of anti-Semitism in Europe. Whereas in the 1920s, immigration had been insufficient to take up all the available land, the situation in the 1930s was the reverse. Immigration picked up in 1931 to 9,500, and accelerated to 30,300 in 1933, 42,300 in 1934 and 61,800 in 1935.

Before the First World War the Jews numbered about one tenth of the population, but by the time of the Second World War, they constituted nearly one third.

*

However, the new trend was not just a change in the numbers.

Jews had become too visible, settling now in towns rather than in the countryside – only one in ten of 1930's immigrants intended to work on the land. Too enterprising: they had watered the desert, which now was in flower. Too prosperous: Jews had preference in employment – nobody other than a Jew was employed on land bought by the Jewish National Fund – and wages had kept pace with the growth of citrus and olive trees. Too well established: a sellers' market and Jewish Agency financial assistance had enabled many Jews to acquire property among the willing sellers, Arab nationalists included. A quarter of the members of the Palestinian Arab Executive made such deals, notably its president Musa Kasim al-Husseini, and Raghib al-Nashashibi. Too numerous: 11–12 percent of the total population in 1922, they constituted, 15 years later, 29 percent in a population of one and a half million (445,457 Jews to 1,5 million Arabs). Last, but not least, too conspicuous: different in appearance, in their ways and their customs and in speech.

It was more than enough to cause the Arabs considerable anxiety and to arouse in the heterogeneous nationalist camp a determination to resist the invasion. In the year of the strike of 1936, the Higher Arab Committee was established to include all parties, notably the Husseinis and Nashashibis. The Grand Mufti, Hadj Amin al-Husseini, well versed in imposing himself on others, notwithstanding objections, (and as shall be mentioned later, ever ready to use force, if necessary), became its chairman.

On three matters all the members of the Higher Arab Committee agreed, at least in principle – a rare display of unity which won it authority and respect in Arab eyes. First, a stop to Jewish immigration, second, the prohibition of land purchase by Jews, and third, the attainment of independence before it was too late – that is, before the Jews had a chance to become a majority.

The trend was all too clear. It was becoming urgent for them to act, and to act in unison.

The Arab revolt of 1936

From April to October 1936 the country was in a state of unrest. The general strike was on an unprecedented scale, better organized, lasting longer and resulting in a greater loss of life than ever before. The yishuv was taken by surprise and the British caught unprepared. The countryside bore the brunt of the disorders. The loss of life amounted to 80 Jews, 140 Arabs and 33 British.

The dark cloud had a silver lining for the Jews – or rather, two. First, so as to give the Jewish community a better protection in times of disorder, the Haganah became a well-armed militia, the nucleus of an efficient army. Second, the long drawn out general strike of the main Arab port of Jaffa, a port the Arab dockworkers could so easily shut down, gave the new port of Tel-Aviv a chance to develop securely in Jewish hands. An essential lifeline, it would, boasted Ben Gurion, make the Mediterranean 'a Jewish sea.' This was, he added, the best thing to have happened since the Balfour Declaration:

> The first and principal lesson of these disturbances . . . is that we must free ourselves from all economic dependence on the Arabs . . . We must not find ourselves in a situation where our enemies are in a position to starve us, to block our access to the sea, to deny us gravel and stones for construction.[8]

*

A British reaction to the revolt of April to October 1936 was expected. The Administration, for its part, was left suspended, pulled in different directions by conflicting presuppositions with respect to Jewish immigration: on the one hand, the notion that Jews had a right of entry, or on the other, that they were tolerated. According to the 1922 White Paper, Jewish

immigration was 'by right, not on sufferance', and so the British were honour bound, as Weizmann was to remind them. Nonetheless the matter was being reconsidered in view of the impact of the revolt and the diligent interest of the Arab states.

Jewish reaction to the revolt led to the abandonment of a purely defensive and non-aggressive approach to troubles. A policy of self-restraint – or non-retaliation – had prevailed so far, in that it limited itself to sheltering the Jewish community from attacks. This was reflected in the changing role of the Haganah and the formation from its ranks of a secret component, the Irgun Zvai Leumi.

Behind the instigation of the Irgun stood the extremist Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky, leader of the Revisionists, a party devoted to one particular issue, namely the extension of Palestine to include Transjordan – an objective to be achieved by force if necessary. He had resigned from the Jewish Agency in 1925 to form his own Revisionist party, and from the World Zionist Organisation in 1935 shortly after the assassination of Arlosoroff, then head of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, his party being suspected of complicity in the murder.

At the opposite end of the political spectrum stood Judah Magnes, Chancellor of the University of Jerusalem, and erstwhile leader of a pacifist movement, Brit Shalom. He placed his hopes on brokering an agreement between Arabs and Jews, based on the two principles of bi-nationalism and parity.

The Jewish Agency also tried its hand at compromise. In July 1934 Magnes and Ben Gurion approached Auni Abdul Hadi, a leader of the Istiqlal party (a left of centre Arab party), vainly suggesting an agreement on the basis of 4 million Jews and 2 million Arabs as part of an Arab regional federation.

Compromise was not only an elusive objective – it divided Zionists themselves, as well as anti-Zionists, some tentatively in favour, others strongly opposed.

The decisive months: October 1936 – October 1937

Despite these failures to reach a compromise, the situation was by no means hopeless. Indeed, it could be argued that it had reached a point of equilibrium, making a compromise possible. The Arabs might well have gained the upper hand, had they revolted at an earlier stage, when Jews were a tiny minority. The Jews, on the other hand, while able to survive the Arab revolt of 1936, were still too few in number to be secure. As Ben Gurion was to express it, the revolt had been launched too late from an Arab point of view, and too early from a Jewish standpoint.

> He was right (comments Tom Segev) by the late 1930s the Arabs no longer had the strength to threaten the national home. The institutional foundations laid by the Zionists in the first twenty years of British rule and under British sponsorship were firmly established. But the Jews were still a minority in Palestine and not strong enough to defend themselves.[9]

The two sides had reached a stalemate, one in which the British Administration still had a part to play. Shertok, in October 1936, declared the British Government to be 'a permanent element in this country.' Ben Gurion was of the same opinion, saying: 'We must not renounce the Mandate.' The two differed, however, on the chances of an agreement. Shertok was sceptical but Ben Gurion hopeful:

> We must not be sceptical. We ought to believe that tomorrow there will be an agreement with the Arabs – and act accordingly.[10]

*

Kallenbach's arrival in India, in May 1937, came at a crucial moment. It was about time. The Arabs had suspended their revolt the previous October. The British were concocting another White Paper. The Nazis in Germany had stepped up their persecution of Jews, who could only flee or tremble. As stated by Martin Gilbert:

> The year 1937 was to be a decisive one for the Jews in Palestine.[11]

He added this observation: 'The Zionist imperative in 1937 was defence as well as discussion.'[12]

6

The Offer of July 4th, 1937

In the course of June 1937, Kallenbach sought to enlighten the Mahatma. His advocacy of the Zionist cause was not in vain. As Gandhi listened with an open mind, his indifference to Jewish claims melted like snow in the sun.

How is one to explain Gandhi's disinterest prior to 1937, and his sudden conversion?

Gandhi's change of mind

First, it was Nehru, not Gandhi, who, as President of the Indian National Congress in 1936 and 1937, determined policy. Not only was Nehru the accepted authority for foreign affairs, but his policy regarding Palestine was quite unambiguous. It was pro-Arab. Reinforcing the authority of his 'political heir' was Gandhi's awareness of his own limitations, revealed at the time of the Caliphate campaign.

In any case, Nehru or no Nehru, Gandhi would have assessed the situation in accordance with his own criteria of whether, when and how to become involved. His Satyagraha in 1906–14 in South Africa is a demonstration of these rules of engagement.

It owed its success to its limited objectives. It targeted the so-called Black Law of 1906 – the Asiatic Registration Act – then, in 1907, the Asiatic Immigration Act. Later still, it targeted the

Government's refusal to fulfil its promise to abolish the imposition of a Three Pounds Tax per capita on indentured labourers and their families on termination of their contract, if they did not re-indenture. The campaign was thus limited to remedying new discrimination suffered by the Indian and Chinese communities. It was not directed against the much wider issue of apartheid and its injustices. Thus limited, it proved successful. It was a lesson that Gandhi was never to forget.

The Jews in British Palestine did not suffer any such flagrant discrimination. Indeed it can be argued that the British Administration, in seeking to hold the balance between Jews and Arabs, were even-handed, if not partial to Jewish interests. When Gandhi underlined (in 1938) a similarity between the Indians in South Africa and the Jews, he was thinking, not of the Jews living in the Mandatory territory, but of the European Jews, 'the Untouchables of Christianity.'

In similar fashion, a second rule imposed limitations: the flexible, imprecise and delicate notion known by the Indian name of swadeshi, a mixture of do-it-yourself, charity-begins-at-home and self-sufficiency.

> Swadeshi is that spirit within us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings, to the exclusion of the remote. Thus in the matter of religion I must restrict myself to my ancestral religion . . . In the domain of politics I should make use of the indigenous institutions . . . In the field of economy I should use only those things that are produced by my immediate neighbours.[1]

The 'Blacks' and 'Coloured' were not 'immediate neighbours' in that sense – except when he was tending to those wounded in battle (Gandhi had enrolled in the ambulance service at the time of the Zulu war).

His involvement in the Caliphate issue is no exception. It was as an Indian safeguarding Indian Muslim interests:

> If I were not interested in the Indian Mahomedans, I would not interest myself in the welfare of the Turks any more than I am in that of the Austrians or the Poles.[2]

This remark prompted Shimoni to add, for he was probably acquainted with Gandhi's disbelief in the Armenian genocide:

> He might just as well have added: the Armenians or the Jews.[3]

This insight into Gandhi's sense of fairness and priorities goes some way to explaining his attitude before 1937, his acceptance of the 'natural desire' of the Jews to live in Palestine and his reluctance to sanction any dispossession of the Arabs' land – in fact, his commendation of the status quo. In 1937, after reconsidering his position in the light of Kallenbach's explanations, he was inclined to be of some assistance in undoing the tangle.

Kallenbach's influence

During their twelve year separation, Kallenbach had become more and more conscious of his Jewish identity. He had first to bring the Mahatma down to earth, to that part of the earth which is Palestine. This he was able to do, thanks to the ties of friendship and gratitude.

For him, a bachelor, the war had been a watershed. He had remained interned in the Isle of Man until 1917 when, in an exchange of prisoners of war, he was sent to Germany. There he stayed till the end of the war. Home ties, going back to his childhood in Memel, and the resumption of a successful professional life in South Africa eventually gained the upper hand

in his priorities, and his pre-war hopes of being Gandhi's right-hand man in India faded away. From South Africa – free from anti-Semitism until the Boers' accession to power – he observed the political changes in Germany and provided for his German relatives to settle in the Union.

The Jewish architect remained nonetheless a Gandhian at heart, even if, after a joyful exchange of letters once the war had ended – and the unhelpful suggestion that Gandhi might improve his health in a German spa – the correspondence more or less lapsed.[4]

Their belated reunion in May 1937, ostensibly that of a powerful statesman and a humble envoy, proud to have been entrusted with such a mission, rekindled in Kallenbach the joys of friendship and the yearnings of a spiritual vocation, and, in Gandhi, memories of his struggle in South Africa and Kallenbach's invaluable contribution – a debt he could not fail to repay.

*

Thus alerted to the difficulties that Jews were encountering in Palestine, Gandhi promised to give the matter close consideration, to study Zionism and its requirements, and to assess what needed to be done. He undertook to study whatever documentation would be sent to him, and to keep abreast of events.

He kept quiet about this promise, but he kept it.

Lanza del Vasto[5]

Gandhi also set in motion his own enquiries, after Kallenbach's departure in July 1937. He sought the help of Lanza del Vasto, a European admirer and disciple of non-violence who had come to India in 1937 to meet the Mahatma and to undertake a pilgrimage to the source of the Ganges. Shantidas, as Gandhi called him, spent four months with him, before and after Kallenbach's visit. When Gandhi heard about his project to

found a non-violent community in France, and about his intended pilgrimage to Palestine on his way back to Europe, he asked him to report on the dispute in Palestine, showing his concern.

Before leaving India, Lanza del Vasto, on the 20th of February 1938, went to Haripura, where the Indian National Congress was meeting, to say good-bye to Gandhi. The Mahatma's last words to him were about Palestine:

> You will write to me . . . You will give me a first hand account of the conflict between Jews and Muslims. That conflict is breaking my heart. You will tell me what you think. But you will write to me before and after that. Now it is time for you to go.[6]

It so happened that Lanza del Vasto altered his plans and he only arrived in Palestine at the end of 1938 – another of the crucial delays which punctuate this saga – by which time the Rebellion was under way, and at its fiercest. There was nothing for him to testify but gunfire, Arabs killing Jews, the politeness of British policemen, his disguise as an Arab that helped him to survive unscathed.

There was no useful information to be passed to Gandhi. He could only have reported, as he did at a later date:

> There was firing in every direction . . . At the roadside sprawled a man, his open mouth crawling with ants . . . In Bethlehem, at Christmas, I made my way to the grotto between two lines of tanks . . . Three men wearing the djellabas, their headdress pulled over their ears, waited, gun at the ready, to waylay a Jew, grey suited, a fugitive from Russia, Germany, or Poland, on the last lap of his long journey to the Promised Land. The task for the future Gandhians of the West is clear: religious reconciliation.[7]

At least the conclusion would have cheered Gandhi, and likewise the news that a non-violence movement was taking root in Europe.

*

There was a further sign that Gandhi was beginning to reassess his stance on Palestine under Kallenbach's guidance: the fact that he approved Kallenbach's decision to establish himself in Palestine. Kallenbach planned to join a kibbutz where he could count on finding a Gandhian way of life. The idea, a sort of half-way house between life in India and life in South Africa, between professional and manual work, between family and single status, like his recent purchase of land in Palestine, came to nothing.

It was only in death[8] that Kallenbach finally settled in Palestine. His ashes lie in the cemetery of the renowned Degania kibbutz, which was founded by A. D. Gordon. On his tomb is engraved, in Hebrew, this epitaph: Seek the Good – Ask for Justice – Walk Straight.

The holiday in Segaon

Gandhi and Kallenbach had spent three weeks together at Tithal before moving to Segaon. Tithal, a small coastal village, was the home of Gandhi's secretary, Mahadev Desai. From there, they moved to the newly established ashram at Segaon – successor to the Sabarmati ashram, near Ahmedabad. Gandhi had declared, at the time of the Salt March and the 1930 Satyagraha campaign, that he would not return to Sabarmati until India had become independent. In moving from Sabarmati to Segaon, he was also distancing himself from unhappy times. There had been internal disputes, he was overworked and in poor health. His older son, Harilal, had converted to Islam in 1936, and although it was only a temporary lapse, lacking any real religious motivation, Gandhi had been distressed by it.

Finding an alternative site for his ashram had not been easy. He entrusted the search to Mirabehn, Admiral Slade's daughter, whom Gandhi looked upon as his own. She later wrote:

> It was difficult to find any suitable village. After walking out day after day in all directions, I finally decided that a village called Segaon (the future Sevagram) about five miles to the east of Wardha, would be the best, or rather the least unsatisfactory.[9]

It was a village of 600 inhabitants, of whom three quarters were Untouchables. No more than 50 could claim to be literate, and only 3 or 4 understood what they were reading. The chosen site proved to be unfortunate in one respect – not mentioning the heat of central India, the malaria mosquitoes and the snakes – there was another larger village of the same name, some miles away, and letters often went astray. At Gandhi's request and with the villagers' consent, the name was changed about three years later to that of Sevagram.

Not only was Gandhi by now fully briefed on the Zionist cause, he also saw himself as a mediator. It was a role he had already assumed in the politics of his own country: he had so informed *The Times* on the 14th of April 1937:

> My function is that of a mediator between Congress and the Government.[10]

He was ready to act likewise in Palestine.

Political power in reach of Congress

Mediation would be difficult, but Gandhi was no doubt feeling confident, having that very year, 1937, succeeded in resolving a dispute in his own country. The Government of India Act of

1935 had provided for 'home rule' at provincial level in British India. This fell far short of satisfying the Indian National Congress' demand for independence.

Under Nehru's leadership Congress had initially declared a total boycott of the 1935 Act. It did, however, decide to take part in the elections of provincial assemblies in February 1937, and rather to its surprise, it swept the board. In 6 of the 11 provinces it had won an absolute majority and emerged as the strongest party in three others.

Electoral success faced Congress with a dilemma. Some favoured a continuation of a total boycott. Others were prepared to seize the opportunity to exercise power at the provincial level, provided – and this became the crucial issue – it was clear that Provincial Governments had full authority and that the Governors were limited to formal and ceremonial duties.

Congress refused to take office, unless provided with a written guarantee that there would be no interference by Provincial Governors. It was at this point that Gandhi intervened as a mediator. He obtained from the Viceroy, not a written undertaking, but a verbal assurance that ministers would have full responsibility for government at provincial level.

Gandhi had, however, still to win Nehru and the party to an acceptance of the Viceroy's word. This he managed to achieve at the meeting of the Working Committee which met at Segaon on the 5th of July 1937.

Gandhi's offer

Gandhi had asked Nehru to come to Segaon a few days in advance of the meeting, to reach agreement and also give Kallenbach the opportunity to brief Nehru on Palestine. It had needed several telegrams from Gandhi to Nehru before he finally arrived, with only two days to spare. But for a photograph of Nehru and Kallenbach together, one could doubt

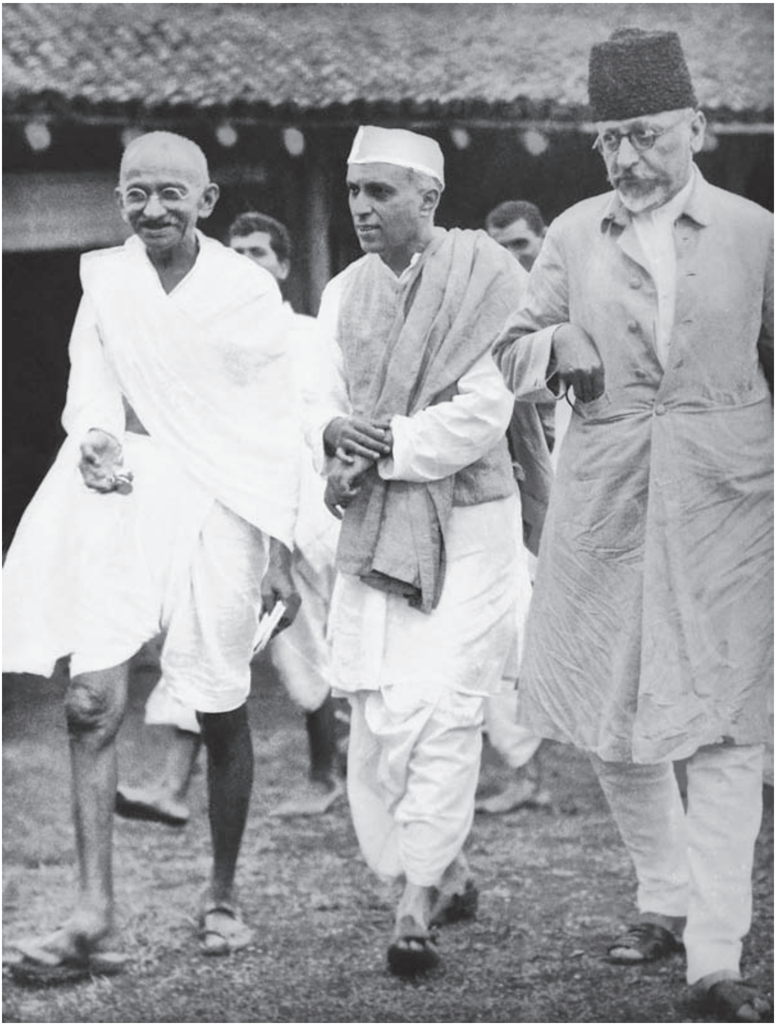


Figure 3: Gandhi, Nehru and Azad, at Segaon in August 1935. They were the three Indian mediators envisaged for the July 1937 Project.

whether any such meeting ever took place. Whether Kallenbach ever had a discussion with Maulana Azad, the Congress President, is unknown, but his consent could be taken for granted. He would not have objected to playing an honorary role as a representative of the Congress Muslims on the chess-board of Middle Eastern politics.

The process of mediation was thus set in motion from India and in the greatest secrecy, with the approval of Nehru and Azad.

On the 4th of July, Kallenbach left Segaon in high hopes. He took with him Ramdas, one of Gandhi's sons, who was in poor health, on the chance that a change of climate would help him to recover. Jerusalem was their first port of call, where Kallenbach was to contact Shertok and convey to him a statement from Gandhi. This set out very clearly the Mahatma's analysis of the situation in Palestine. In addition Kallenbach was to convey to both Shertok and Weizmann an offer to assist in bringing about a settlement, by word of mouth to Shertok and by letter to Weizmann.

The fact that Gandhi took care to communicate this proposal to both Weizmann and Shertok shows that it was not made lightly. It was a serious proposition addressed to the two branches of the Jewish Agency, to Shertok in Jerusalem and to Weizmann in London.

Gandhi's underlying statement of principle to Shertok is to be found in the Central Zionist Archives. It was never divulged.

> Statement given by Mahatma Gandhi to Mr. Kallenbach on Zionism in July 1937, Central Zionist Archives:
>
> Assuming that Zionism is not a material movement, but represents the spiritual aspirations of the Jews, the introduction of Jews in Palestine under the protection of British and other arms, is wholly inconsistent with spirituality.

> Neither the Mandate nor the Balfour Declaration can therefore be used in support of sustaining Jewish immigration into Palestine, in the teeth of Arab opposition.
>
> In my opinion the Jews should disclaim any intention of realizing their aspiration under the protection of arms and should rely wholly on the goodwill of Arabs.
>
> No exception can possibly be taken to the natural desire of the Jews to found a home in Palestine. But they must wait for its fulfilment, till Arab opinion is ripe for it. And the best way to enlist that opinion, is to rely wholly upon the moral justice of the desire and therefore the moral sense of the Arabs and the Islamic world.
>
> What about the Jews who have already settled in Palestine? Under the moral or ethical conception they would be governed by the same considerations as are applicable to newcomers. But I have little doubt that immediately the support of physical force is disclaimed, and the Jewish colony begins to depend upon the goodwill of the Arab population, their position would be safe. But this, at best, is a surmise. My opinion is based purely on ethical considerations, and is independent of results. I have no shadow of doubt that the existing position is untenable.[11]

Kallenbach wrote to Weizmann on the 4th of July, the day of his departure from Segaon. In all probability the letter had been dictated by Gandhi, for it is in his style, Victorian and concise. It would certainly have had his approval. It offered Indian mediation:

> Both (Nehru and Abul Kalam Azad) think that by direct conversation between Arabs and Jews only, will it be possible to reach an understanding and they believe the

> time is ripe now for such conversations. They are willing to assist to bring about these conversations, when called upon to do so, so is Mahatma Gandhi.
>
> The Mohammedan population of India, being 70,000,000, is by far the most important in the world. The intervention of some of their leaders with a view to reach conciliation, may have far reaching results. What do you think about it?[12]

*

Charles Freer Andrews, a Cambridge Fellow and an Anglican priest devoted to the cause of the poor Indians, was also drawn in at this stage.

His friendship with Gandhi was second only to that of Kallenbach. He had helped the Indian cause in South Africa and Kallenbach was ready to meet the expenses of sending him to Palestine. Andrews was very willing to go, as he was writing a book on Christ.

Gandhi showed him his statement to Shertok. Andrews found it too abstract, and, as we know from a letter he wrote some time later to Kallenbach, he was critical of Gandhi's approach and hoped to exert some influence on the Mahatma's analysis of the situation. He also intended to meet Jewish personalities outside of the Jewish Agency.

In the short biography on her great-uncle, Isa Sarid recalls that Gandhi:

> was to start a mediation process from India with Kallenbach as a mediator. Kallenbach was supposed to be assisted by the Anglican priest Charles Freer Andrews whose intended visit to Palestine was financially supported by Kallenbach. Andrews would have talked with Professor Judah L. Magnes who was actively promoting Arab-Jewish conciliation.[13]

Andrews and Kallenbach, who knew each other from having met in South Africa, were, thus, chosen to act as mediators. Andrews was an ideal choice, neither Muslim nor Jew, extremely well connected and in possession of all the necessary diplomatic skills. The choice of Kallenbach was, in Margaret Chatteerjee's opinion[14], misjudged, but Gandhi needed to counterbalance Nehru's and Azad's pro-Arab inclinations, and who better than a Jew who could be trusted by the Jewish Agency?

*

An encouraging letter arrived just as Kallenbach was leaving. Lanza del Vasto had written to Gandhi about his resolve to establish a Gandhian fraternity in Europe as 'an offshoot of the tall tree planted by you.'[15]

7

The Relevance of the Indian Context of 1937

To fully understand the nature of Gandhi's initiative and what became of it, one must bear in mind four issues, to which, in 1937, Gandhi gave priority: non-violence, Hindu-Muslim unity, independence and untouchability – all related to Indian politics.

The relevance of satyagraha or non-violence

The practice of non-violence is not simple.

> My innermost urge is for pure non-violence. My weakness is that I do not know how to make it work. I use my intellect to overcome that weakness. If this intellectual cleverness loses the support of truth, it will blur my vision of non-violence, for is not non-violence the same as truth?

It involves inevitable contradictions. Here are three examples.

Gandhi took part in several wars. He organized an Indian medical corps, which served in the Boer war and in the Zulu campaign. He tried to do likewise on arrival in Britain in 1914, and in 1918 back in India. It was to the detriment of his health that he travelled the country recruiting.

During the Caliphate campaign Gandhi arranged quite successfully to avoid any violence, but he did nothing to dampen the inflammatory oratory of the Ali brothers – an omission which he was later to regret (3rd of May 1937):

> Take the Ali brothers, for instance. Their tongues were sharp. I knew them intimately . . . They said what they liked of opponents. In short, I have not been as firm in this matter as I should have been. So long as our people did not go beyond words I paid no attention to what they said. *I remained indifferent to violence in speech.* [italics added]. Later it became a habit and I even stopped taking notice of it.[1]

He confessed in *Harijan* (17th of June 1939):

> But looking back upon those times I see that I compromised non-violence. I *was* satisfied with a *mere abstention from physical violence.* [italics added]

Gandhi also tolerated the ambivalent attitude of the Congress party in the 1940s: its tentative approaches to the authorities in the war – always turning out to be unfortunate – and the vain desire to partake, as allies, in the defence of India.

When India clashed with Pakistan over Kashmir, he manifested how far he was prepared to go in defence of Mother India. To quote Mirabehn:

> Kashmir . . . was just now ruthlessly invaded by tribesmen from the Pakistan side. That he (Gandhi) did not object to the use of the military was not because he liked that method, but because he realized that the Government could handle the situation in no other way. Just as preparatory training is necessary if you are going to use

> military methods, so it is necessary if you are going to use non-violent methods. But the will to keep up that training had left the Congress leaders now that they had inherited the fighting services from the British.
>
> Bapu[2] did not complain. He knew that, in the days of the Satyagraha battle, his chief colleagues had accepted non-violence only as a policy . . . (but) whichever method they used, there should be 100% bravery.[3]

*

Gandhi discussed the difficulty of applying non-violence with Lanza del Vasto, questioning the readiness of his own people to prepare themselves for non-violent action. He compared them to his four European disciples, all of them – Kallenbach, C.F. Andrews, Mirabehn, Lanza del Vasto – so outstanding and so determined. By chance, they had spent part of 1937 with him.[4] Lanza del Vasto recalls Gandhi's lament:

> You are one of them, perhaps you could manage to bring them round to non-violence. It is beyond me. Even if, exceptionally, they accept the idea, *they do not know how to handle it* (in English in the French text).
>
> How wonderful it would be to succeed. Your people are enterprising, bold, fresh. Yes, they have a freshness of mind which we lack. They are not like us, encumbered with the weight of the past.[5]

Gandhi could go no faster than his party, bent on achieving independence and unconvinced that it was attainable by non-violent methods. Gandhi was forced to show understanding, patience, and to compromise – even to tolerate violence.

> There are degrees of violence and non-violence. The Working Committee has not wilfully departed from the

> policy of non-violence. It could not honestly accept the real implications of non-violence. It felt that the vast mass of Congressmen had never clearly understood that, in the event of the danger from without, they were to defend the country by non-violent means. All that they had learnt was that they could put up a successful fight, on the whole non-violent, against the British Government . . . I would not serve the cause of non-violence, if I deserted my best co-workers because they could not follow me in an extended application of non-violence. I, therefore, remain with them in the faith that their departure from the non-violent method will be confined to the narrowest field and will be temporary.[6]

*

In preaching non-violence to the Jews of Palestine, Gandhi chose to test 'Arab goodwill.' This could not be forthcoming so long as the Jews relied upon British arms to secure a definite right to reside in Palestine. This, a legitimate desire, could only be turned into a recognized right by a non-violent appeal to 'the moral sense of the Arabs and the Islamic world.'[7]

When in legal practice in South Africa, he had always favoured out-of-court settlements, saving his clients time and money.

> There are a hundred ways of approaching the Arabs, was his advice in the Jewish case.[8]

Gandhi, however, added a caveat: 'My opinion is based purely on ethical considerations and is independent of results' – a wise observation, but hardly one to convince the Jewish Agency.

*

The Jewish Agency would speak for the Jews. The Arab spokesmen had still to be named. The participation of extremists

from the Higher Arab Committee, who had led the 1936 strike and who had the wind in their sails, was being left in abeyance.

It was left to non-violence to find a way around all the obstacles, the necessary preliminary to any final settlement.

Hindu-Muslim unity and the proposed mediation.

The letter of the 4th of July was shrewdly worded, impressive, and, at first, quite promising. What better pressure group imaginable – seventy million Muslims – from a country which had no Jewish problem, weighing alongside a few million Arabs. While some Indian Muslims may have been nursing old sores – the abolition of the Caliphate by the Turks and the lack of support from their Arab brethren, leading to the collapse of their movement – others, mainly teachers in Indian Koranic schools, had championed the Arab cause in Palestine, organizing demonstrations on a 'Palestine Day', when illiterate Muslims shouted 'down with the Balfour Declaration'.[9] Once more, Palestine was becoming an issue with Indian Muslims.

On closer examination, the letter of the 4th of July contained a flaw, which was to undermine Gandhi's efforts – that is, the inherent assumption that the Indian National Congress could claim to speak for the Muslims of India. The elections of February 1937 had gone some way to warrant this claim. But its handling of the political situation sawed off the branch on which it was seated.

The same claim was made by the Muslim League, with Mohamed Ali Jinnah now at its head. He had reorganized the party prior to the 1937 elections. These showed that his party had substantial support among Muslims in several provinces, such as the United Provinces and Bombay Presidency. For that reason Jinnah had high hopes of joining a provincial government, and consequently expressed loudly his willingness to cooperate with the Indian National Congress and the Gandhian

political, economic and social policy called the 'constructive program'. There was no real substantial difference between the League and Congress, according to him, at that time.

However, a long history stood in the way of sharing power. In 1920, a time when Jinnah was a member of the Congress party (as well as of the then friendly Muslim League), he had openly come out against Gandhi's anti-British policy of non-cooperation. He had also been booed, because he would not say 'Mahatma Gandhi', only 'Mr. Gandhi'. This incident had prompted his self-imposed exile to London, where he started a successful legal practice. It is said that, a decade later, when attending a dinner, he was told of Nehru's remark: 'Jinnah is finished' [10]. He decided to return to Bombay and recycle his political career in 1934. He thus became president of the Muslim League, a very small and inefficient party at the time, which he reorganized for the February 1937 elections. The success of the League, if real, was limited – 5 percent of Muslim votes – and left Nehru unimpressed.

In Bombay, the local leader of the Congress party, B.G. Kher, was looking forward to forming a coalition government with the League, but he was vetoed at a higher level. Jinnah entrusted to Kher an appeal to Gandhi who was resting at Tithal awaiting Kallenbach's arrival. Answering the request, Gandhi wrote to 'Mr.' Jinnah on the 22nd of May 1937:

> Dear Shri Jinnah,
>
> Mr. Kher has given me your message. I wish I could do something, but I am utterly helpless. My faith in (Hindu-Muslim) unity is as bright as ever; only I see no daylight out of the impenetrable darkness and, in such distress, I cry out to God for light.[11]

Jinnah, a secularist, did not appreciate the answer, but he then sought a meeting with Gandhi. The next reply was offhand and

taken as a slight. He was referred to Azad, Gandhi's new guide and adviser on Muslim affairs [12]. Behind this rebuff was Nehru's opposition to any such meeting – as disclosed in a letter to Vallabhbhai Patel, the strong man of Congress:

> I don't see any chance of my meeting Jinnah at present. Jawaharlal (Nehru) doesn't desire it.[13]

Another rebuff awaited Jinnah in the United Provinces, where the Muslim League was at its strongest. An unacceptable condition was imposed, namely that League members join the provincial government not as a group, but individually. They should 'cease to function as a separate group.'

Nehru rubbed salt in the wound, saying that there were only two parties in India, Congress and the British Government, *'and the rest must line up.'*[14] [italics added]. Jinnah proclaimed:

> I refuse to line up with Congress.
> There is a third party in this country and that is the Muslims.[15]

*

Naturally, Jinnah did not take kindly to such dictation, nor to the choice of Azad as a guide. He and Nehru were henceforth bitter rivals competing for the Muslim vote – a rivalry which sowed the seeds of the future partition of India. Jinnah concluded:

> The majority community have clearly shown their hand that Hindustan is for the Hindus.[16]

An ironic twist was to follow. The strong local Muslim parties in the Punjab and in Bengal did fall in line in the autumn of 1937 – by merging, not with Congress, but with the Muslim League, reinforcing Muslim opposition to the Indian National

Congress under Jinnah's leadership. On the 15th of October 1937, Jinnah was acclaimed for the first time as Quaid-i-Azam, the Great Leader.[17] The Muslim League, numbering only a few thousand members in 1937, reached over half a million in 1940.[18]

*

For Gandhi, Jinnah had appeared on the Indian political scene as a troublesome, uninvited guest. Although Jinnah was not yet strong enough to disabuse Congress of its belief that it represented Muslims as well as Hindus, there was no room for complacency. For Gandhi's offer of the 4th of July rested on his influence on Muslim India. As he saw India playing a key role in negotiating an agreement in Palestine, he needed Kallenbach to be on hand, in the limelight, as a trusted go-between, doing a job that the Mahatma should not be seen doing.

> I quite clearly see that if you are to play any part in bringing about an honourable settlement, your place is in India.[19]

In the same frame of mind, Andrews wrote to Kallenbach that the key to the problem is to be found in India 'in an extra-ordinary manner.'[20]

For Gandhi, the offer of the 4th of July 1937 was shrouded in the sacred belief in Hindu-Muslim unity:

> Just as I say that I do not want swaraj, if it is to be won through untruth and violence, today I would also say that I do not want swaraj without Hindu-Muslim unity.[21]

Independence – or swaraj – and the proposal

Gandhi was in the grip of an overwhelming desire – independence for India. He had completely cast aside the image

of a British subject, whose rights were matched by duties, especially in time of war. The massacre at Amritsar, at the time of the Caliphate movement, when General Dyer had opened fire on an unarmed crowd until all ammunition had been spent – the crowd being trapped in a square from which there was no issue – had made him a rebel. His two campaigns demanding independence (1920–4 and 1930–4) had shaken India to its roots and opened the way to freedom. The ensuing reforms introduced by the Government Act of 1935 fell far short of the demand for independence and were therefore rejected. But the chance of coming to power at provincial level shook the resolve to destroy the Act, and once it had been made quite clear that real power would be in the hands of ministers to the exclusion of Governors, a meeting of the Congress Working Committee was convened at Wardha on the 5th and 6th of July 1937 to decide whether to accept the British assurances that ministers would have a free hand.

'Yes. Love. Bapu'[22], says the two-word telegram Gandhi sent, on the 7th, to the princess Amrit Kaur, another dear friend, whom he usually playfully addressed as 'Dear Idiot', signing himself off as 'tyrant'. Nehru had been finally convinced, and, as president of the Congress, fought the battle of rallying the members of the Working Committee behind Gandhi's decision.

'Dear Idiot', wrote Gandhi to his princess on the 10th of July, 'Jawaharlal is truly a warrior, sans peur et sans reproche (fearless and beyond reproach). The more I see him, the more I love him.'

Thus the Indian National Congress found itself in government in 7 of the 11 provinces. The party's top leaders stayed out of office. They formed a super-structure, called High Command, which gave them overall control. As Gandhi explained in *Harijan* on the 24th of the same month:

> Whereas formerly the Ministers were amenable to the control of the Governors, now they are under the control

> of the Congress. They are responsible to the Congress. They owe their status to the Congress. The Governors and the Civil Service though irremovable are yet answerable to the Ministers. The Ministers have effective control over them up to a point. That point enables them to consolidate the power of the Congress, i.e., the people. The Ministers have a whip-hand so long as they act within the four corners of the Act, no matter how distasteful their actions may be to the Governors . . .
>
> Congressmen should also realize that there is no political party in the field to question the authority of the Congress. For the other parties have never penetrated the villages. And that is not a work that can be done in a day.[23]

*

The assertion of political power by Congress in India coincided with the preparation of mediation in Palestine. The one helped to shape the other. The example set by India and the relegation of Provincial Governors to a purely formal and ceremonial role was to be matched in Palestine by the exclusion of the British from the proposed Jew-Arab talks.

This was made clear in Kallenbach's letter to Weizmann and from Gandhi's message to Shertok. In fact, Shertok was asked by Kallenbach when they met that July, on Gandhi's request, to make a public statement to that effect on behalf of the Jewish Agency, as a pre-condition of any such talks. We know this from a letter written by Gandhi to Kallenbach mentioning

> such a firm declaration as I have suggested.[24]

It is not unlikely that Gandhi was looking further ahead – the exclusion of the British from any talks being, in his estimation, a first step towards excluding them from Palestine completely,

when the problems would – or could – vanish ipso facto. After all, was he not, five years later, to launch his Quit India campaign?

*

The problem – one of the problems – is the order of Gandhi's priority of the three issues singled out so far in this chapter – non-violence, Hindu-Muslim unity, and independence. During the 1930s priority was accorded in the order just stated. The eruption of Jinnah and the reorganization of the Muslim League reversed it. Independence became the top priority, so that Indians could reach agreement among themselves unimpeded by the policy of divide and rule.

The same was true for Palestine. Nehru was later to put it as follows:

> Unless you keep that in mind you will not solve it (the problem). What then is really the problem in Palestine? . . . It is essentially a struggle for independence. It is not a religious problem. British Imperialism played its hand so cleverly that the conflict became the conflict between Arabs and Jews, and the British Government cast itself in the role of umpire.
>
> The problem of Palestine can only be solved in one way, and that is by the Arabs and Jews ignoring British Imperialism and coming to an agreement with each other. Personally I think that there are many Arabs and Jews who desire a solution of the problem in this way.[25]

So spoke Nehru in mid-July 1938. Although Gandhi and Nehru were at one in this respect, Nehru's analysis – and one must not underestimate the weight he carried – had an added dimension, that of nationalist movements effectively challenging imperialism. On this score, the Arabs had more to offer than

the Jews. The Jews were wedded to the mandate. Only Arab nationalism could put an end to it.

Gandhi and Nehru were agreed on the manner of resolving the problem, but felt differently. Whereas Gandhi was inclined to identify himself with Jewish aspirations – even saying once jokingly 'I am half-Jew' – Nehru was not so moved. He was later to say:

> Naturally our general sympathies are with the Arabs. And not only our sympathy but our intellectual conviction tells us that Palestine is essentially an Arab country. To try to change it forcibly into something else is not only wrong but not possible. At the same time inevitably we have great sympathy for the Jews in their terrible distress.[26]

As for how the problem was to be solved, their opinions wavered like seaweed, anchored but caught in crosscurrents. Gandhi kept his fluctuating thoughts to himself. Nehru sometimes showed an unexpected flexibility but remained pro-Arab throughout. He never went beyond saying:

> How to reconcile the two claims is the problem before us. I do not venture to express an opinion except vaguely to say that perhaps an autonomous Jewish area within Palestine might lead to a solution.[27]

This was in marked contrast to what he had told Olsvanger in 1936: that the conflict in Palestine was not between Jews and Arabs, but between them and the British.[28]

*

By coincidence – once more – the British Government had also been reconsidering its options. On the 7th of July 1937 it

published the Peel Report, at the very moment that the offer of mediation reached London and Jerusalem.

The Peel Commission was Britain's response to the general strike of April–October 1936, just as preceding commissions had followed the riots of 1922 and 1930.

Due to its timing, the renown of its members, and the excellence of their enquiry, it gave added substance to Gandhi's own proposal. Gandhi and Andrews studied it closely, their attention focused on the recommendation that Palestine should be partitioned. They knew full well how unacceptable this would be to the Arabs, and equally, how disappointed would be the Jews, offered such a meagre portion of the land, such a Lilliputian home. They decided therefore to put the project in abeyance, calculating that an Arab-Jewish compromise would be more easily achieved once both had vented their frustration with the Report and British overlordship.

At the end of the month of August, about six weeks later, Andrews informed Kallenbach that he would soon leave for Palestine, having discussed at length with Gandhi the timing of his visit.[29]

*

Arab reaction was as anticipated. Saying 'no' had almost become a ritual – as it was to be with Jinnah in India. The Higher Arab Committee was becoming wedded to the slogan: the British to the sea, the Jews to their graves.

The Jews were divided, in the yishuv, in the Jewish Agency, and in the World Zionist Congress. They had expected parity, not partition; a home, not a state; the land of their ancestors, not a mini-replica of the same.

In August 1937 the Zionists assembled in Zurich for their 20th World Congress, where the matter was to be decided: 299 voted for partition, 160 against. They all remembered the prophecy Theodor Herzl confided to his diary after the First

World Zionist Congress at Basle in August 1897, 40 years earlier:[30]

> If I were to sum up the Congress in a word – which I shall take care not to publish – it would be this: at Basle I founded a Jewish state. If I said this loudly today I would be greeted by universal laughter. In five years, perhaps, and certainly in fifty years, every one will perceive it.[31]

The Jews decided to grasp what was offered. Said Weizmann:

> The Jews would be fools not to accept it (partition), even if (the land they were allocated) were the size of a tablecloth.[32]

Ben Gurion wrote to his son Amos:

> (A) Jewish state in part (of Palestine) is not an end, but a beginning . . . Establishing a small state . . . will serve as a potent lever in our historical efforts to redeem the whole country.[33]

*

Alongside partition, a transfer of population was envisaged by the Peel Report. It would have involved a small number of Jews – about 1,250 – and a much larger number of Arabs – 225,000 – who would be entitled to compensation. This would help the process of economic separation, already well under way. It would strengthen the yishuv, as nothing else could, according to Ben Gurion. He saw in the transfer of population an opportunity that would give the Jews more than a state, more than a government or sovereignty: the consolidation of a free homeland.[34]

Weizmann planned to buy land in Transjordan to facilitate the transfer, but the transfer came to nothing.

*

The British Government had also to give its answer. It took notice of the mixed reaction – total rejection by the Arabs, and a tactical acceptance by the Jews whose acceptance masked a hidden agenda. Also the League of Nations stepped in, losing no time in supporting the Peel Report, by approving in September 1937 the dispatch of a technical commission to help to implement partition.[35]

It was not until the 8th of December 1937 that the British Government decided to shelve the Peel Report. It had become a bone of contention between the Colonial Office, which was still wedded to Article 4 of the Mandate – the creation of a Jewish home in Palestine – and the Foreign Office, the India Office and the War Office, which were more concerned with ensuring Arab support in the advent of a second world war. The international situation had not improved and the British Government was getting cold feet.

It seemed that the Jews were being left in the lurch, once having decided to grasp their mini-state. They did not know how to, and indeed could not, dispense with British support. Gandhi's advice to be independent of British help made some sense. Kallenbach reasoned with Weizmann in a letter dated 1st of July 1937: what were the Jews to do if that support was not forthcoming any more?

The question was to receive an answer the following year. Faced with an Arab armed rebellion, the British Government allowed the Jewish Agency to cooperate by arming the Haganah. The Jews followed Gandhi's advice to drop British support only later, when the British Government tried to stop the tsunami of European Jews from entering Palestine, but, by then, the Haganah was an experienced fighting force.

The relevance of untouchability

Gandhi had always considered untouchability a blot on

Hinduism. From 1934, after the 1930 non-violence campaign, he decided to retire – at least for the moment – from politics and to devote his energies to better the lot of the lowest of the low. He officially quit the Indian National Congress. He campaigned for untouchables to be allowed to worship in Hindu temples. He stayed in their quarters when travelling. He settled in 1936, in Segaon, one of their villages. He gave them a new name, Harijan, that is, 'son of God', and started a new publication of the same name.[36]

After Kallenbach's visit to the ashram of Segaon, and his preaching to Gandhi, the Mahatma started to link in his mind the problem of the Harijans with that of the Jews. Kallenbach himself might have provided the emotional link.

Both – the Jew and the Harijan – were suffering from persecution, scorn and outrage. Both were subjected to racial discrimination. For both, Gandhi had a passionate feeling, for Kallenbach the Jew and Harijan the Indian, for the Untouchables of Christianity and for the Untouchables of India.

In this frame of mind, he tended to give, in both cases, similar advice. Two instances come to mind. The first is the advice given to Jews to fight in their own European corner the same non-violent battle as had the poor Indians in South Africa. The second rapprochement concerns Gandhi's refusal to accept a separate electorate for out-casts, just as he advised the Jews to refuse to submit to anti-Semitic legislation. To stop the McDonald Award on separate electorates, Gandhi risked his life in a fast unto death; in the same manner, he expected the Jews to lay down their lives to safeguard their rights, instead of leaving their country, their true national home. He was projecting his South African experience, that of a dedicated Kallenbach organizing the illegal crossing of Natal into Transvaal, into the mirage of potential Kallenbachs in Germany and Eastern Europe.

A further link tied the Harijan with the Jews. Just as the Indian diaspora was strewn across the Indian Ocean – in

business, sugar plantation, in mines – so too were the Jews dispersed across the world. But, unnoticed by him, the Indian tide was heading away from home and the Jewish tide now headed back home – the return to Zion. Kallenbach and Andrews, the two mediators, were both deeply implicated, one in the Jewish diaspora, the other in the Indian.[37]

8

O time, suspend your flight
And you, propitious hours,
Suspend your course

Lamartine

The summer of 1937 can be seen, in retrospect, as a time when there was still a chance of success for Gandhi's plan. It was to prove a question of now or never.

Gandhi was kept waiting. Nothing was said, neither by the Jewish Agency nor by Weizmann, about throwing off the cloak of British protection. The acceptance in August 1937 of the Peel Report by the World Zionist Congress showed, however, which way the wind was blowing.

There was one small sign that Gandhi had not been ignored and that his proposal had not been rejected outright. Shortly after Kallenbach had returned to South Africa, Gandhi received a parcel, posted in Jerusalem. It was a 25-page account of Zionism, composed specially for his benefit at Kallenbach's request. No letter, no note, was enclosed. There was no indication of the sender's name and address. The bizarre omission was reported in a letter from Gandhi to Kallenbach. Nevertheless Gandhi studied the document and concluded in that same letter:

> If it is true, a settlement ought not to be difficult.

*

Gandhi optimistically awaited a more tangible sign. He sensed 'the time was ripe now' for action. He was optimistic, because of two events and the interpretation he put upon them. The first was the coming to power of the Indian National Congress in the Indian Provinces. The second was the publication of the Peel Report, at the beginning of July 1937.

July 5–6th, 1937: Congress in power

By winning office in a majority of the Provinces, the Indian National Congress made Gandhi – in an odd sort of way – the master of India, albeit still subject to British rule. Although his name had not been on the Congress register since 1934, he was now enthroned as the eminence grise of the party, and at Segaon he held court.

The Congress prided itself on representing all Indians, including all Muslims, and indeed, its authority was virtually unchallenged and unrivalled in the summer of 1937. The newly established High Command maintained party unity and ensured party discipline. It was led by seasoned leaders, all devoted to Gandhi: Vallabhaibhai Patel, the strong man of Congress, Rajendra Prasad, Abul Kalam Azad, Kripalani, Rajagopalachari, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and last but not least, the president of the Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru. It is true that Gandhi and Nehru were often in profound disagreement, but they invariably resolved their differences. The time was not yet, but would come, when Gandhi's advice would fall on deaf ears – the time when he would say 'they do not listen to me anymore'; but that time was still a long way away. The Mahatma was in 1937 the most powerful man of India, next to the Viceroy.

*

Gandhi's enhanced authority in India undoubtedly strengthened his hand with Palestine. But he had still to decide how to use

it. That the question was discussed at some length is clear from his correspondence with Kallenbach, who had returned to South Africa. On the 16th of August 1937 Gandhi wrote:

> I had a long talk with Andrews. I do not know what he will be able to do. The more I observe the events happening, the more convinced I feel of the correctness of my advice. Without that there will be no happy home for the Jews in Palestine.[1]

They were still discussing tactics at the end of the month:

> I am conferring with Andrews also as to what he should do in Palestine.[2]

Gandhi kept the outcome of the discussions with Andrews to himself (only Pyarelal, the secretary in attendance, would have known about it), but gave Kallenbach a clue. Referring to these discussions, he wrote:

> But I have not the time to tell you all these things – nor you the need to know them. It is enough for you to know that I am redeeming my promise to interest myself in the movement.[3]

Andrews and Gandhi shared the same vision of the settlement talks: the problem was to be solved from India – and could best be solved from India, on account of its pro-Arab stance, its many million Muslims and its impeccable record in the defence of the Caliphate when Palestinian Muslims laid low. May this be another opportunity in a hundred years to forge a common Hindu-Muslim identity?

'Here in an extraordinary way is the key to he whole question,' wrote Andrews. And Gandhi:

> I quite clearly see that . . . your place is in India. It might be that you might have to go at times to South Africa. You might have to go frequently to Palestine, but much of the work *lies in India as I visualize the development of the settlement talks.*[4] [italics added]

*

Congress self-promotion as the voice of all Indians soon ran into an insuperable obstacle. It was not the first time Gandhi claimed to represent every Indian in India. It caused the failure of the 1931 Round Table Conference in London. This time the consequences of such a claim proved to be much more serious.

Jinnah, having been spurned in the aftermath of the provincial elections, was now enacting his revenge. It was the culmination of a series of long-standing resentments, going back to 1920. Jinnah was changing horses. The secular leaning of earlier days gave way; his belief in and advocacy of Hindu-Muslim unity lay shattered, and his suspicion of Congress led him to oppose every Congress move in the Provinces. He rallied Muslims to his side to counter Gandhi's educational policy, now being pursued actively by the Congress governments. Muslims objected to the choice of the flag with its Asoka wheel, to the national anthem Bande Mataram, 'Hail to thee, Mother', to the preference given to Hindi over Urdu, to the spinning of khadi at school – the indigenous cloth which Nehru hailed as 'the livery of freedom'. Many other things jarred the Muslims: preferential treatment for Hindus, pressure on Muslims to join the Congress – the so-called 'mass contact campaign' launched by Nehru – the wearing of khadi, the Gandhi cap, vegetarianism, cow protection – in short, Hindu raj, Hindu overlordship.[5]

The horse which had carried the colours of the Caliphate, but ever since confined to the stables, had found a new rider.

Just as the Indian National Congress identified itself with Gandhi, so Jinnah came to personify the League. As one Viceroy remarked: 'The League is Jinnah and Jinnah is the League.'



FIGURE 4: Gandhi and Jinnah in discussion, November 1939, before the demand of the Muslim League for an independent state of Pakistan.

July 7th, 1937: The Peel Report

Gandhi was at Segaon when the Peel Report was published. Kallenbach had left, but Andrews had arrived. They were agreed in thinking that it increased the prospects of a successful mediation, that it struck a balance, calling on Arabs to recognize the immovable weight of the Jewish presence, and on Jews to accept the need for Arab consent.

It was decided that Andrews would leave for Palestine as soon as the British Government had made its intentions known. It was expected that the announcement would displease Arabs as well as Jews, thus giving an incentive to the proposed settlement talks.

> In August 1937 Andrews informed Kallenbach that in his and Gandhi's view, it would at last become opportune for him to visit Palestine as soon as the question of partition was settled one way or the other by the British.[6]

As they awaited their opportunity, the 'propitious hours' were fast running out. They had misread the situation. The Jews' acceptance of a mini-state had made them ever more dependent on British protection. The Arabs, for their part, became ever more intolerant of a Jewish presence. Again they said no – no to partition, no to Jewish immigration, no to the purchase of Arab land by Jews, no to British administration of Palestine.

The summer was spent denouncing the Peel Report, arousing pan-Arab support and preparing for guerilla warfare.

*

The neighbouring Arab states, meeting at Bludan, in Syria, in September 1937, left the British Government in no doubt about their opposition to a Jewish state on Arab land. The Mandatory Power, caught in the storm, went in search of calmer waters.

The following month, India's Muslims, rallying as in the old days of the Caliphate's sacred cause, added their weight. The Viceroy was handed a letter of protest, signed by all Muslim members of Legislative Councils, on the 10th of October 1937. The Muslim League recorded its condemnation, and the Indian National Congress, not to be outdone, did likewise. The future of Palestine had rapidly become a pan-Islamic issue.

The Arab rebellion was under way, which would pull apart Gandhi's proposal. Autumn – the season for shooting game – had brought out the guns. Winged, Gandhi's project fell to the ground.

9

End of a Summer Dream

Gandhi's summer dream was not to be realised. Overwhelmed by the harsh realities of the following autumn, it faded, and was quietly buried. It had run into no fewer than five obstacles which, in combination, proved insurmountable. It was laid to rest in the month of November – a month fraught with destiny, the month when summer dreams come to an end.

First obstacle: the Rebellion

The first of these was the Arab Rebellion. It started at the beginning of the autumn with the assassination of the British Commissioner of Galilee, on the 26th of September 1937. The rebellion was a serious threat to British rule. For eighteen months, the country was plunged into virtual civil war.

The British Government had learnt its lesson from the previous revolt of 1936. The police force, which had been fully stretched in the disorders of the previous year, was expanded by recruiting 3,000 Jews. The army was reinforced by the arrival of as many as 30,000 troops. Wavell was called on to take command. Assisting the British Army and the Palestine Police was the Haganah, the Jewish Agency's militia, now a fully armed fighting force. The Jews, who had up to this point adhered to a policy of havlaga or 'self-restraint' in face of aggression, now went on the offensive. The Revisionists of

Jabotinski went further, resorting to terrorism under the secrecy of an organization founded in 1937, the Irgun. The latter made a point of celebrating the 14th of November 1937, the day the policy of havlaga was lifted. The Irgun targeted the Arabs, and did not hesitate – what was unheard of so far – to retaliate against the British, when one of its men, caught planting a bomb, was sentenced to death.

*

A state of civil war divided not only Jews and Arabs; the Arabs themselves were at loggerheads.

> The rebellion had deteriorated into a free-for-all among the rebels themselves. More Arabs were being killed by fellow Palestinians than by the British and the Jews. In the countryside the bands clashed with one another over territory or loot, while villagers and townspeople increasingly resisted their efforts to extort 'contributions' and other economic impositions.[1]

On the 1st of October the members of the Higher Arab Committee had been arrested – altogether over 200 arrests were made. The Grand Mufti, Hadj Amin Al-Husseini, disguised as a woman – or was it as a Bedouin? – fled his hiding place at the Dome of the Rock on the 12th of October, taking refuge in Lebanon.[2] From there he could give directions, if not to the Nashashibis, who in July had withdrawn from the Higher Arab Committee, then at least to his Husseini clan. There was no central command. Hundreds of autonomous groups roamed the countryside. Volunteers from Syria, Iraq and Transjordan arrived to join in the attacks on Jewish settlements and kibbutzim. The Jews themselves went on the offensive. Special Night Squads, inspired and organized by Captain Orde Wingate, an officer in the British Army, ambushed those

preying on the settlements. In Arnold J. Toynbee's opinion, Wingate's S.N.S. gradually became what was 'secretly intended, the beginnings of a Jewish army'.

Second obstacle: hiatus in British policy

With one iron hand Westminster handled the uprising mercilessly, and with the other, gloved in velvet, pursued a policy of appeasing the Arabs. Violence followed by concessions – the familiar pattern – was being repeated, bolstering once again Arab nationalism.

'Palestine: the immediate problem' was the title of the memorandum which the Foreign Office submitted on the 27th of October 1937 for discussion by a Cabinet Committee attended by the Colonial Office, the War Office and the Air Ministry. It reported to a full meeting of the Cabinet on the 19th of November 1937. It was decided to back-pedal on the issue of partition. It also limited Jewish immigration in the period August 1937–March 1938 to 8,000. As for longer term policy, this was referred to yet another commission, the Woodhead Commission.

These concessions came too late to pacify the Arabs, and merely antagonized the Jews. The latter anticipated, correctly in fact, a reversal of the Balfour policy which was at the core of the Mandate. They were now being forced to look to the day the British would forsake their previous commitments to the Jews, to the day they would have to stand on their own feet – as Gandhi had advised. But they saw quite clearly the tremendous risk of trusting what Gandhi called the 'Arab goodwill'. They would not, they could not, in the present circumstances adopt – to quote Gandhi – 'the heroic remedy',[3] namely

> to rely wholly on the moral justice of the (Jewish) desire and therefore the moral sense of the Arabs and the Islamic world.[4]

Gandhi himself had fully realized – in the better circumstances of the summer – the precariousness of his suggestion. His message to Shertok had been less than reassuring:

> I have little doubt that immediately the support of physical force is disclaimed, and the Jewish colony begins to depend upon the goodwill of the Arab population, their position would be safe. But this, at best, is a surmise. My opinion is based purely on ethical considerations, and is independent of results. I have no shadow of doubt that the existing position is untenable.

*

Kallenbach also had his own doubts. He had already written to Weizmann on the 1st of July 1937 – that is three days before passing on Gandhi's proposal – to question the wisdom of

> leaving our wives and children, not to speak of ourselves, at the mercy of Arab goodwill.[5]

Kallenbach was in two minds and the aim of his letter was to ask for Weizmann's guidance. Was it better for the yishuv to depend on the Arabs' goodwill *now,* since they would face the issue *anyway* at the end of the Mandate? Kallenbach also knew from experience the difficulties and sacrifices involved in applying non-violence.

Weizmann's answer is not known.

Third obstacle: Kallenbach's absence

A third obstacle to Gandhi's proposed mediation was the failure of Kallenbach to return to India. As in their South African days, Gandhi was depending on his common sense, his resourcefulness, his knack for organization, his reliability.

Ideally, Kallenbach should have prolonged his stay in July 1937. Instead of three weeks it was hoped that he would stay three months, which would have been ideal to see the project through. Gandhi wrote to H.S.L. Polak from Segaon on the 17th of June 1937:

> (Kallenbach) will stay three months if he is allowed to by his firm. He is awaiting a cable reply.[6]

His firm could not do without him, and Kallenbach had to leave. However, he looked forward to returning for an indefinite period by mid-November. This expectation comes out strongly in four of Gandhi's letters. One letter even stresses the hope that the stay might exceed three months.

In one letter dated 21st of June 1937, Gandhi wrote to Mirabehn:

> Kallenbach must take the steamer on 7th July but he promises to return in December and stay three months.[7]

The very day after Kallenbach's departure, amid the turmoil of the Working Committee's vital session, Gandhi wrote to his friend on the 5th of July:

> My dear Lower House,
>
> The departure was touching. I live in the hope of your certain return in December if not in the middle of *November*.[8]

On the same day he wrote to Kantilal Gandhi:

> Kallenbach will come again in *November* or December for three months. He may stay even longer.[9]

And on the 20th of July, to Manilal and Sushila Gandhi:

> He himself intends to come here again in November.[10]

*

The same theme is broached in the eight letters Gandhi wrote to Kallenbach in the second half of 1937. They appeal to him to come back in time. A letter dated 30th of September insists:

> No matter how immersed you are in the work there, I look to you to extricate yourself from it for coming here *in time*. And please remember you won't promise the return date.[11] [italics added]

And on the 11th of October:

> I hope there will be no hitch about your coming.[12]

When *November* came, no Kallenbach was in sight.

Fourth obstacle: health

The stress and the anxiety broke Gandhi's health. At the end of October he fell seriously ill on his way to Calcutta, where he wanted to attend a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee (29–31st of October 1937). He was consequently bed-ridden for two weeks, between life and death, until the 17th of November 1937. Then he took a whole month to recover on the beaches of Juhu, near Bombay, from the 6th of December 1937 to the 7th of January 1938.

Andrews also was suffering a bout of illness and made for the healthy heights of Simla, the Viceroy's summer place. Pyarelal, the secretary, was himself affected with lovesickness. His

beloved had been married on the 4th of September to a rival from a higher caste.

The situation in Palestine had taxed their inner strength. In his distress, Gandhi clung to the belief in the reasonableness and pertinence of his advice to the Jews, but with fading hopes, collapsing faith, and friendship tested. The correspondence with Kallenbach gives an insight into the steps to this Calvary.

On the 20th of July 1937:

> I have read the Palestine Report . . . I am more than ever convinced that the only proper and dignified solution is the one I have suggested, now more so than ever before. My solution admits of no half-measures. If the Jews will rely wholly on the Arab goodwill, they must once and for all renounce British protection.[13]

On the 16th of August 1937:

> The more I observe the events happening, the more convinced I feel of the correctness of my advice . . . without that there will be no happy home for the Jews in Palestine.[14]

On the 30th of September 1937:

> The Jewish question is becoming a very ticklish question. A heroic remedy is required for a desperate disease.[15]

On the 11th of October 1937:

> The Palestine question does now engage my attention. It is becoming more and more intricate for want of a firm declaration such as I have suggested.[16]

*

When Gandhi left the Juhu beaches and their soothing breezes, everything looked doubtful: a Jewish declaration, the prospects of a mediation, and his friend's commitment. He must have concluded, a month later, that, henceforth, timing was not important anymore, and he wrote to his indispensable partner on the 28th of February 1938:[17]

> My dear Lower House,
>
> Your absence which was wholly unexpected caused me deepest disappointment. I expected you even up to the last day. But it was not to be. I have Ramdas's (Gandhi's son who had left with Kallenbach in July 1937) letter giving me your message. I must not force the pace. You must come in your own good time. I should be satisfied if you will religiously decline to take new obligations and simply set your heart on fulfilling the existing ones. And it may be useless your coming here during the hot months. The best month is November. From then to February it is cool enough. But it is cool also during the rains. Now make your choice.
>
> I am quite well.
>
> Love
>
> Upper House

Fifth obstacle: Jinnah's retaliation

At this very time, to make things worse, Gandhi had to face the radicalization of Jinnah, which was enhanced by the unexpected growth of the Muslim League.

At its annual session at Lucknow, on the 15th of October 1937, Jinnah, in his capacity as President of the League – a

position he would retain, unchallenged – launched a virulent attack against Gandhi and the Indian National Congress:

> Whereas they are in a majority and wherever it suited them, they refused to co-operate with the Muslim League Parties and demanded unconditional surrender and signing of their pledges . . . Hindi is to be the national language of India and Bande Mataram is to be the national song and is to be forced upon all. The Congress flag is to be obeyed and revered by all and sundry . . . the majority community have clearly shown that Hindustan is for the Hindus . . .

Gandhi retorted on the 19th of the same month:

> Dear friend,
>
> . . . Of course, as I read it, the whole of your speech is a *declaration of war.* Only I had hoped you would reserve *poor me* as bridge between the two. I see that you want no bridge. I am sorry . . . ' [italics added]

This letter brought him another from Jinnah, on the 5th of November – *that fateful month of November*:

> Dear Mahatma Gandhi,
>
> . . . I am sorry you think my speech at Lucknow is a declaration of war. It is purely in self-defence . . .

The November knell tolled, plaintively lamenting the demise of a mediation engineered with such high hopes.

10

The Depressing Year 1938

Gandhi did not abandon his commitment to bringing about a settlement in Palestine. Having become so deeply involved in finding a solution, he hung on throughout 1938, despite feeling worn out by the political impasse in his relationship with Jinnah and by domestic disharmony in his own ashram. He went through periods of despair, of depression, of silence – so much so that he contemplated total withdrawal. Revived by the Himalayan air during a long visit to his Muslim friends, he ventured once more to offer his advice, in a long article entitled 'The Jews', published on the 26th of November 1938. It was written without consultation with Kallenbach and included the phrase 'Palestine belongs to the Arabs.'

The relationship with Jinnah

Gandhi's hopes of achieving a settlement in Palestine rested entirely on being able to speak on behalf of all Indian Muslims. Therefore, before attending the next Congress session starting on the 19th of February 1938 at Haripura, he tried to heal the breach with Jinnah. He pleaded with him on the 3rd of February:

> Dear Mr. Jinnah,
>
> In your speeches I miss the old nationalist . . . In 1915 . . . everybody spoke of you as one of the staunchest of

> nationalists and the hope of both Hindus and Mussalmans. Are you the same Mr. Jinnah? . . . What proposal can I make except to ask you on bended knees to be what I thought you were.

To which Jinnah replied, unimpressed, on the 15th of that month:

> I think you might have spared your appeal and need not have preached to me on your bended knees to be what you had thought I was.

*

In a similar fashion, after the Haripura Congress, Gandhi tried repeatedly to bridge the rift, but to no avail. Correspondence led nowhere. Jinnah was laying down conditions which Gandhi could not accept. He wrote to 'Dear Mr. Gandhi,' on the 3rd of March 1938:

> We have reached a stage when no doubt should be left that you recognize the All-India Muslim League as the one authoritative and representative organization of the Muslims of India and on the other hand you represent the Congress and other Hindus throughout the country. It is only on that basis that we can proceed further . . . Of course I shall be glad to see you, although I shall be equally glad to see Pandit Jawaharlal or Mr. Bose (the new Congress President), as you may desire. The matter as you know will not be clinched without reference again to you by either of them. Therefore, I will prefer to see you first. In any case I am sorry I cannot come to Segaon before the 10th of March. I have to go to Bombay . . . But we can fix up the time and place that may suit us both.

Two meetings, one on the 28th of April, the other on the 20th of

May, proved fruitless. On one occasion, Gandhi had asked Jinnah to call on him on his return journey from Calcutta to Bombay. Jinnah refused the courtesy and the old man, in a delicate state of health, had to make the journey himself.

Gandhi's deference to Jinnah enhanced his opponent's status, and did nothing to lessen his political ambitions. Under his leadership, the Muslim League became an implacable rival of the Indian National Congress.

The political impasse

The two parties, Gandhi's Congress and Jinnah's League, became engaged in a war of words and sanctimonious declarations. Ostensibly, the resolutions tabled at party meetings were denunciations of British policy in Palestine, but they also registered rival bids for Muslim support.

The opening salvo was fired at the 25th session of the All-India Muslim League at Lucknow, 15–18th of October 1937. Jinnah had been elected President. It was not for the first time. He had been elected President in December 1916 at Lucknow first, then in September 1920 at the extraordinary session at Calcutta, and then in May 1924, at Lahore. This time he would keep his office till 1947.

The 1937 conference promulgated the following:

> The All-India Muslim League declares, *in the name of the Muslims of India,* that
>
> 1 – recommendations of the Peel Commission, and the subsequent statement of policy presented by the Secretary of State of the Colonies to Parliament, conflict with their *religious* sentiments and in the interests of world peace demands its rescission without further delay,
>
> 2 – annul of the Mandate if policy not changed,

> 3 – Muslim rulers to save the holy places in Palestine from the sacrilege of non-Muslim domination and the Arabs of the Holy Land from the enslavement of British Imperialism backed by Jewish finance,
>
> 4 – complete confidence in the Supreme Muslim Council and the Arab Higher Committee . . . ' [italics added]

The resolution concluded that if Britain refused to mend its ways, it would become 'the enemy of Islam', and that measures would be taken 'according to dictates of faith.'[1] The Muslim League was playing the card that had so successfully been played twenty years earlier in the Caliphate uprising, the one card they could play better than Congress – a trump card.

*

The Indian National Congress, not to be outdone, expressed its own strong support for the Arab cause. Its immediate response was to call a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee at Calcutta for the end of October 1937. Claiming to speak in the name of 'the Indian people', it declared:

> The Committee record their emphatic protest against the reign of terror that has been established in Palestine by British Imperialism with a view to coerce the Arabs into accepting the proposed partition of Palestine and assure them of the solidarity of the *Indian people* with them in their struggle for national freedom.[2] [italics added]

A further statement on Palestine was made at the party's 51st session, held in Haripura in February 1938. It is interesting to compare the respective resolutions. The All-India Committee's statement was made in Gandhi's absence. He had been too ill to attend. The wording of the party's subsequent resolution

reflects Gandhi's presence at the Haripura meeting, for it reproduces the advice he had given to Shertok and Weizmann.

> The Congress condemns the decision of Great-Britain as a Mandatory Power to bring about partition of Palestine in the teeth of the opposition of the Arabs and the appointment of a Commission to carry out this project.
>
> The Congress records its emphatic protest against the continuation of the reign of terror which is still being maintained in Palestine to force this policy upon the unwilling Arabs.
>
> The Congress holds that *the proper method of solving the problem* by which the Jews and the Arabs are faced in Palestine is *by amicable settlement between themselves and appeals to the Jews not to seek the shelter of the British Mandatory* and not to allow themselves to be exploited in the interests of British Imperialism.[3] [italics added]

*

In March 1938, a month after Haripura, rioting between Muslims and Hindus occurred in Ahmedabad, causing Gandhi great distress. The city lay close to his first ashram at Sabarmati, from where, in 1918, he had led a non-violent movement in support of textile workers. They knew him. They loved him and his non-violence. Yet they ignored his teachings. The violence between Muslims and Hindus in this special corner of India caused him great grief.

It prompted the notable statement on his order of priorities, at the meeting of one of the Gandhian associations, on the 28th of March 1938:

> Just as I say that I do not want swaraj (independence) if it has to be won through untruth and violence, *to-day I would*

also say that I do not want swaraj without Hindu-Muslim unity.[4] [italics added]

Domestic disharmony in the ashram

Party politics were not the only cause of Gandhi's depression in 1938. He also had to endure upsets nearer home. Some of those staying in his ashram were so put off by his uncharacteristic behaviour that they decided to leave. He sought their pardon, writing letter after letter, week after week.[5] His princess – his 'dear idiot' – complained to Nehru that Gandhi was at the time surrounded by 'lame ducks'[6].

Even his loyal secretaries, Mahadev Desai and Pyarelal, sought to absent themselves. To Pyarelal he wrote at the end of November 1937: 'What have I done? Leaving me ill . . . ' To Mahadev Desai he declared on the 31st March 1938: 'I can never part from you.'[7]

*

His own self-confidence that he had achieved chastity was rudely upset by a dream he had in April. He no longer trusted himself to be massaged by the women of the household, except by his wife. He suffered a further depression in that same month, when she, accompanied by the wife of Mahadev Desai, his secretary, visited the Hindu temple at Puri, a temple closed to Untouchables, and for that reason, was ostracized. Depressed, he observed long days of silence.

In May, a visit by Kallenbach's niece, instead of Kallenbach himself, proved counter-productive. She could not stand the heat, nor the mosquitoes, found it difficult to do without chairs and was embarrassed by the lack of privacy. She arrived, so delicate and fragile. She had been specially trained as a masseuse, but had arrived at the time when Gandhi would not be touched by a woman. He sent her promptly back to Kallenbach before she could fall ill.

> In all respects, it was for Hanna Lazar the most inopportune time for her visit to India.[8]

Gandhi was longing for Kallenbach's presence, and the opportunity to discuss Palestine. He wrote to him on the 17th of July 1938, one year after the first visit to India:

> You will come the first opportunity you can. Do not multiply your adventures. If you will resolutely set a limit to them, you will be free. *What a tragedy going on in Palestine! It is heart-breaking.*[9] [italics added]

*

As Gandhi's heart broke and as his blood pressure reached dangerous levels, he took to observing long periods of silence, lasting weeks, even months. It had long been his practice to observe a day of silence every week. Essential communication was reduced to short messages on the back of used envelopes. Sealed lips brought him rest and served as a cure. After Hanna's departure, he kept silent in August and for the whole of September. As he wrote to his son, Ramdas, on the 14th of September 1938:

> I keep uninterrupted silence these days.

Sealed lips would eventually serve him well, not as a cure, but as a policy of keeping his thoughts on Palestine to himself.

'The Jews', published in Harijan, November 26th, 1938

What prompted Gandhi to write this long article which the Jews were to find so objectionable? He was anxious to react to the deteriorating international situation: the Anschluss in mid-March and the Czech crisis in September. The persecution of

Jews increased the numbers leaving Germany, Austria and beyond. The Evian Conference on the 6th of July 1938 could not find countries ready to increase their quotas substantially – not even the United States. In August 1938, Gandhi and Nehru managed to accept immigrants with the requisite professional qualifications, like a drop of Jewish blood in the Indian Ocean. It was only in Palestine that they were being welcomed – adding to the difficulty of a Jewish-Arab settlement. He was urged to speak out.

*

His depression had left him by the month of November, after a long stay in the mountains with his Pathan friends. He had paid them a short visit in May, but this time he stayed from the 6th of October to the 9th of November – a real holiday. He returned to the plains with renewed vigour and determination, inspired afresh by this Muslim adventure.

The incentive to write the article without Kallenbach arose from events of the 9th and 10th of November. The Woodhead Commission published its Report on the 9th, Ataturk died on the 10th, and in the night of the 9–10th a pogrom organized against German Jews and Jewish property devastated their community. Reichskristallnacht – the night of the broken glass – was the Nazi answer to the death of a German diplomat in Paris, wounded by Herschel Grynszpan, a 17 year old student who wanted to revenge his father, brutally expelled from his town by the Germans.

On the 11th of November Gandhi wrote the article on the Jews. It was published in *Harijan* on the 26th of that month.[10]



FIGURE 5: Mahatma Gandhi and the Frontier Gandhi, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, on a mountain walk during the Mahatma's revigorating stay in the North-West Frontier Province, October 1938.

11

The Two Palestines: The Palestine of Biblical Conception and the Palestine of Geography

Gandhi

In the long November article Gandhi mentions two Palestines, side by side, one geographical, the other spiritual:

> The Palestine of the Biblical conception is not a *geographical* tract. It is in their (the Jews) hearts. But *if* they must look to the Palestine of *geography* as their *national home,* it is wrong to enter it under the shadow of the British gun. [italics added]

Dating Palestine

The geographical Palestine has a long history, but where does it begin? There are many dates and events from which to choose, from the day Abraham, the father of the believers, left his native town of Ur in Iraq to settle in Palestine.

The Israeli national anthem, which is based upon a poem by Naphtali Herz Imber, entitled Hatikvah – Hope – looks back to these days, more than two thousand years ago:

> As long as deep in the heart
> The soul of a Jew yearns,

And towards the East
An eye looks to Zion

Our hope is not yet lost
The age-old hope
To return to the land of our fathers
To the city where David dwelt.

The second verse was given a slightly amended version:

Our hope is not yet lost
The hope of 2,000 years,
To be a free people in our land
The land of Zion and Jerusalem.

In Genesis, 15:18, Palestine is God-given and stretches from the Nile to the Euphrates. It is given to the Jews, and the Jews have a long memory. When Ben Gurion quotes this passage from Genesis:

To your offspring I give this land,
from the river of Egypt to the great river of Euphrates,

he is making a political claim that, for him, needs no further justification.

Churchill was also willing to look at the Jewish claim 'from a perspective of one, two or three thousand years.'[1]

Or is 'Palestine' a name which philologists trace back to the Philistines, and therefore to the story of David and Goliath? The descendants of the Philistines have – have they not? – a claim to their ancient land; likewise the tribes living on that land prior to being ousted by the Jewish conquest. Many Arabs today have made that claim.

Or could Roman times serve as terms of reference? The all too rebellious province of Judea was renamed Palestine at the

start of the first millennium. Thus the Romans *created* Palestine, and at the same time destroyed the second Temple built by Solomon on what is called today the Wailing Wall. From that fateful decision originates the desire of some, and the fear of many, to see a third Temple rise some day in Jerusalem.

Or could the Islamic conquest in the 7th century be made a starting point, as in Article 11 of the Hamas charter. This states:

> Palestine is Islamic waqf (religious trust) land of the Muslims for all time. It is forbidden to give up any or all of it.[2]

*

Gandhi himself sought to accommodate both Jewish and Muslim claims. He certainly rejected the British Mandate in Palestine as a valid starting point.

> The mandates have no sanction but that of the last war.[3]

He had, moreover, at the time of the Caliphate movement, plainly stated in *Young India*:

> The Jews cannot receive sovereign rights in a place which has been held for centuries by Muslim powers by right of *religious* conquest. [italics added]

Because he refused the validity of the Peace Treaty and the Mandates, he was seeking an earlier date, and logically enough, a date convenient to his Muslim friends.[4]

He also stated the consequences of his choice (without, however, denying himself the right 'to examine the soundness or otherwise of the doctrine'), namely:

> The Muslims claim Palestine as an integral part of Jazirut-ul-Arab (Arabia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine). They are

> bound to retain its custody, as an injunction of the Prophet.

This endorsement of Muslim claims was not to be taken as a denial of Jewish rights. Custody of the Jazirut-ul-Arab

> *does not mean that* the Jews and the Christians cannot *freely go to* Palestine, or even *reside* there and *own property.* What non-Muslims cannot do is to acquire *sovereign jurisdiction*. [italics added]

*

Gandhi, a potential mediator, stalled by the Jewish Agency's failure to meet one pre-condition – the exclusion of the Mandatory Power – took on the role of counsellor. His *Harijan* article of November 26th, 1938 was entitled 'The Jews', for it offered counsel not only to the Jews of Palestine but also to the Jews of Europe.

'The cry for the national home does not make much appeal to me.'

The article involved Gandhi in deep controversy, not so much on account of his stark insistence on non-violence as by its implicit rejection of Zionist aspirations. He asked each and every Jew to acknowledge as 'home' the country of their birth and/or residence.

This gave Jews, already settled in Palestine, the right to remain 'only by the goodwill of Arabs', but questioned the right of other Jews the right to settle in Palestine.

In the article Gandhi used the example of the French Jews. They have one home, they do not need two homes – and that settles the problem.

> The Jews born in France are French. If the Jews have no home but Palestine will they relish the idea of being

> forced to leave the other parts of the world in which they are settled? Or do they want a *double home* where they can remain at will? This cry for the national home affords a colourable justification for the German expulsion of the Jews. [italics added]

In short, the key word in Gandhi's letter to the Jews, just as in the Balfour Declaration, is 'home'. In defining it as the country where one is born or works, Gandhi dealt conclusively with the question of immigration into Palestine and, at the same time, invited Jews and Arabs to settle their differences on the basis of the existing situation. The Arabs of Palestine were being asked to consider the Jewish settlers as rightful citizens, but the Jews of the wider world were to be excluded. It was an astute analysis, which pinned down both sides to the status quo and left them with no option but to reach agreement.

*

Was Gandhi to say the same to his own fellow Indians of the diaspora, whose plight he liked so much to compare with that of the Jews? Had they lost their ties with Mother India, these 2.4 million Indians in the British Empire: 800,000 in Ceylon, 600,000 in Malaysia, 300,000 in Mauritius, 300,000 in Trinidad, Jamaica and British Guinea, 165,000 in South Africa, 73,000 in Fiji, 70,000 in East Africa?[5] Did they not dream of a double home, despite having lost their caste and place in Indian society by going overseas and despite being unable to afford the journey?

Non-violence and the Jews

The validity of Gandhi's advice to the Jews of Palestine clearly depended on the feasibility of his advice to the Jews of Europe. They were being asked to stay put and to combat Hitler using the weapon of non-violence.

> If I were a Jew and were born in Germany and earned my livelihood there, I would claim Germany as my home . . . I would refuse to be expelled or to submit to discriminating treatment. And for doing this, I should not wait for my fellow Jews to join me in civil resistance but would have confidence that in the end the rest are bound to follow my example. If one Jew or all the Jews were to accept the prescription here offered, he or they cannot be worse off than now.

*

Hitler's threatened intervention in Czechoslovakia to seize the Sudetenland and discriminate against its Jewish population was seen by Gandhi as a test case.

> By experience I have found that people rarely become virtuous for virtue's sake. They become virtuous from necessity. Nor is there anything wrong in a man becoming good under pressure of circumstances . . . . It was at this moment (Hitler's threat) that it became necessary for one like me to present an alternative which had proved its effectiveness under somewhat similar circumstances . . . I could not restrain myself from suggesting it (non-violence) to the Czechs for their acceptance.[6]

*

It is significant that Gandhi suggested non-violence, first to the Czechs, then to the Jews, within a couple of months. The common link between Czechs and Jews was, in his own judgment, that they both formed a tightly-knit community, unarmed – or relatively so – and that the conditions were in some way comparable to the odds he had to fight against in South Africa. He explained to his critics:

> What may ultimately prove impossible of acceptance by crores of people, *undisciplined* and unused till but recently to corporate suffering, might be possible *for a small, compact, disciplined* nation inured to corporate suffering. [italics added]

This he wrote on the 5th of November 1938 at Peshawar.

A fortnight later, he again emphasized that a 'compact and homogeneous community' – like the Jews – stood a better chance of success.

*

Mirabehn, inspired by Gandhi's article 'If I were a Czech', published on the 15th of October 1938 in *Harijan*, had volunteered to travel to Czechoslovakia and help organize 'resistance against Hitler's next move, whatever it might be.' She had already written twice to Dr. Benes on this matter.[7] Gandhi approved. He told her:

> I thought you would be feeling the call. You should certainly go if it can be arranged . . . If the final decision is for you to go, what I feel is the sooner you can go, the better, if you can stand the continental winter . . . I am already moving with reference to the financial part of it. I have relaxed temporarily the silence rule. Hence I have been able to dictate this while munching grapes.[8]

The project had, however, to be abandoned, other matters having arisen, requiring Mirabehn's attention.[9] Europe's Jews were left to fend for themselves.

*

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad tells the story that Gandhi gave

similar advice to the Viceroy, in the event of a German invasion of England. This left the Viceroy speechless:

> When Gandhiji told Lord Linlithgow that the British people should give up arms and oppose Hitler with spiritual force, Lord Linlithgow was taken aback by what he regarded as an extraordinary suggestion. It was normally his practice to ring the bell for an A.D.C. to come and take Gandhiji to his car. On this occasion he neither rang the bell nor sent for the A.D.C. The result was that Gandhiji walked away from a silent and bewildered Viceroy and had to find his way out to his car himself. When Gandhiji met me, he reported the incident and expressed his surprise that the Viceroy should forget the normal courtesies. I replied, 'The Viceroy must have been so astonished at your suggestion that he did not remember what his normal practice was.' Gandhiji burst into laughter when he heard this explanation.[10]

12

A Pharaoh May Come That Knows Not Joseph

Ben Gurion

In publishing his article 'The Jews', Gandhi was conscious of plunging into 'unknown waters.' At the same time he wrote to Kallenbach:

> How I wish you were here at this time wholly free from the cares of the South African obligations. But that was not to be. If you can come without damaging the business, do come . . . Is there a chance of you being free from the cares of business?[1]

Kallenbach's business had grown considerably. His firm now had four offices and employed 35 architects. However, after reading Gandhi's article, he decided – in a state of shock? – to put Gandhi before business and to proceed to India as soon as possible. Gandhi telegraphed his answer on the 9th of December 1938: 'Sooner the better'. Kallenbach arrived on the 20th of January, amidst waves of Zionist dissent produced by Gandhi's plunge into 'unknown waters'.

The Buber-Gandhi Controversy

The pages of *Harijan* were filled with Gandhi's replies to his critics.[2]

The most notable protests came from two prominent members of the University of Jerusalem: the Chancellor Judah L. Magnes, and Martin Buber, professor of philosophy and sociology, newly arrived from Germany. Each wrote a long critique, a veritable antithesis, which they sent to Gandhi, first in March 1939, and again at the end of April.[3]

Gandhi never replied to these, an odd contrast to the attention he had been paying to many others much less eminent.

There is some doubt whether Gandhi ever saw Buber's and Magnes's counter-arguments. The only certainty is that they arrived at Gandhi's ashram in Segaon, despite the confusion of place names. Gandhi was away. It is said that:

> Gandhi acknowledged receipt of the letters from Buber and Magnes in a brief postcard but did not enter into further correspondence with either of them.[4]

Buber's biographer, Aubrey Hodes, mentioned a postcard on which Gandhi had scribbled that he did not have time to write a reply.[5] In 1946 Louis Fischer asked Gandhi – at Magnes's request – whether he had read the letters. Gandhi could not remember. This non-exchange of letters came to be known as the Buber-Gandhi Controversy.

It seems that Gandhi chose not to respond, but exactly for what reason remains something of a mystery. It is possible that by the time Buber and Magnes wrote – four months after the publication of the 'Jews' – Gandhi was tired of the controversy aroused by his article.

It has been contended by Simon Wolff, an anti-Zionist opposed to the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, that the anti-Zionist arguments which he had presented in a letter to Gandhi prompted Buber and Magnes to reply. Gandhi, allegedly happy to find a Jewish supporter, had published part of Wolff's letter in *Harijan*. Wolff, proud to be so honoured,

showed this to Buber and Magnes, who thereupon themselves decided to write to Gandhi.[6]

In all probability, Gandhi left Buber and Magnes unanswered because their letters arrived at a time when Gandhi had begun to recognise how limited a role he could play in resolving Jewish-Arab differences in Palestine. He was being inhibited by a lack of Muslim support in India itself. This was sensed quite clearly by Shohet, a journalist from The Jewish Advocate, Bombay, who met Gandhi on the 7th of March 1939, and sensed the Mahatma's determination, which he duly reported to Eliyahu Epstein of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency:

> We cannot expect anything from Gandhi at all. He views the Palestine question as a purely Moslem question.[7]

From the Woodhead Report to the failure of the Round Table Conference (March 17th, 1939)

Meanwhile the British authorities were reconsidering their assessment of the situation in Palestine. The Woodhead Report had been published on the 9th of November 1938, the day of Cristalnight. It laid to rest the Peel Report, and led to renewed consultations with all concerned, including neighbouring Arab states.

Although the Rebellion had been mastered by 1939, the political deadlock remained. The Arabs' position remained unchanged, in spite of the shelving of partition. They stuck tenaciously to a triple 'no-policy': no to immigration, no to land purchase, no to the Mandate. The Jews matched their obstinacy, clinging to the idea of partition and the hope of, at least, a mini-state.

The British Government convened a Round Table Conference in London on the 7th of February 1939.

The Jewish leadership was on its guard. Ben Gurion feared a repeat of a well-known episode in the history of his people.

> A Pharaoh may come that knows not Joseph, that may want to forget the promises of his predecessors.[8]

Lord Halifax had replaced Anthony Eden as Foreign Secretary in February 1938. In India he is best known as Lord Irwin, the Viceroy who signed the Gandhi-Irwin Pact at the end of the Salt March of 1930, and who was criticized by Churchill for his cordial relations with 'the naked fakir.'

Just as Gandhi had tried in July 1937, Halifax sought from Weizmann, in the name of the Jews, a preliminary declaration.

> (They) should on their own free will dispose of their rights by offering terms of conciliation and, by the long view of their own problems, be satisfied that all parties may give freely in order to reach a solution.

However, whereas Gandhi was a disinterested mediator – apart from securing his good standing with the Muslims of India – Halifax spoke in the name of the Mandatory Power. The right in question was the right to settle in Palestine. The British Government was not acting, like Gandhi, from 'ethical considerations', irrespective of results. It was confronted in 1939 by a massive increase of Jewish would-be immigrants. The British Government was, in effect, asking the Jews voluntarily to renounce a right which had become, for the Mandatory Power, an embarrassment. The Cabinet had in fact already taken its decision. The Colonial Secretary, Malcolm MacDonald, had prepared a secret memorandum in January which stated:

> We cannot accept the contention that all Jews as such have a right to enter Palestine. It would clearly be absurd to

> admit that all the millions of Jews in the world have a right, which they should be allowed to exert, if they wished to settle in Palestine . . . Arab detestation of the Jewish invasion into Palestine being what it is, it would be wholly wrong to suggest that this large Arab population should one day in their own native land and against their will come under the rule of the newly-arrived Jews.

*

When the Conference met, in February, there was no round table, only separate rooms, with Jewish spokesmen in one, Arab representatives in another. The once banned Higher Arab Committee attended, together with representatives of neighbouring Arab states, but the Grand Mufti, declared persona non grata, was not invited. No meeting of minds occurred, only an exchange of messages through intermediaries. The Conference failed miserably. It merely publicized the obstacles standing in the way of a negotiated settlement. It left the British Government to decide, Solomon-like, the next step.

Kallenbach's second visit: a mishap (January 20th – March 31st, 1939)

A dead end had been reached, not only at the Round Table Conference, but also by Gandhi himself in his role as peacemaker. The long-awaited opportunity to broker a Jewish-Arab compromise had never really materialized. Planned at the time of Kallenbach's first visit in 1937, it had by the time of his second visit in 1939 become a lost cause.

The two friends would have had very little opportunity, on this second visit, to discuss Palestine. Kallenbach was soon laid low with malaria, and, as he refused to take quinine, he took time to recover his strength.

'Kallenbach is on his death-bed', wrote Gandhi to Mahadev Desai.[9]

Gandhi had to leave his bedside and Segaon when dealing with two issues that had nothing to do with Palestine. Thus the two friends never managed a fruitful meeting of minds.

*

The affairs of Palestine had been pushed aside while Gandhi solved two complicated issues, the Bose affair and the Rajkot dispute.

The Bose episode

Subhas Chandra Bose had been elected President of the Indian National Congress at Haripura in 1938, succeeding Nehru. Now, in 1939, he was seeking re-election, to which Gandhi was opposed on account of Bose's political leanings – too close to national socialism for Gandhi's liking. An election was held in which Bose triumphed over Gandhi's candidate by 1580 votes to 1377.

Gandhi was determined to fight back but it was two months before the issue was finally resolved, in Gandhi's favour, completely overshadowing Kallenbach's visit. The Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow:

> admired the ability which Gandhi had shown in ousting Bose, although his methods were of questionable constitutional validity.[10]

Bose had called upon Gandhi at Segaon in mid-February but to no avail. Gandhi later managed to win the Congress's Working Committee to his side, when Bose, who had fallen ill, asked for a postponement of the next general assembly to be held at Tripuri on the 7th of March 1939, on the ground that he would be to ill

to attend. The Working Committee, taking the opportunity to interpret Bose's demand as a lack of confidence in themselves, resigned en bloc, with the exception of Bose's brother.

Bose did attend the meeting, but in a wheelchair. Too ill to preside, he was replaced by Azad. Gandhi wisely preferred not to attend, but a motion was introduced calling for the election of a Working Committee, according to Gandhi's wishes. All the members who had resigned were duly re-elected. Bose had lost. Azad took his place. Bose eventually left Congress to form his own Nazi-oriented party, the Forward Bloc.

The outcome did not please Nehru. He and Bose were close friends and not far apart politically, except on Nazism. But he could only accept the fait accompli, 'because Gandhi was India and what weakened Gandhi, weakened India.'[11]

The outcome could not please Jinnah either. He would not accept the presence of a Muslim at the head of Congress and, moreover, he took a personal dislike to Azad.

The Rajkot fast

Rajkot was a small principality. Gandhi's father had once been the Dewan or Prime Minister. The Indian National Congress had obtained from the Head of the State, known as the Takhore Saheb, a promise to convene a ten-man committee to study Congress demands for democratic reform, and moreover, that seven of its members could be chosen by Vallabhbhai Patel, second to Nehru in the Congress hierarchy.

When the Takhore went back on his word, Gandhi was outraged, just as he had been when General Smuts broke his promise to exonerate the Indians from the Asiatic Registration Act of 1906, and when Lloyd George concurred in depriving the Caliph of Jazirut-al-Arab despite an assurance that it would be maintained. As then, as now, Gandhi's response was a non-violent campaign.

Gandhi's wife, who had participated in the South African sayagraha, set out for Rajkot on the 2nd of February. She was among those arrested. Gandhi himself went to Rajkot on the 25th of February, pledging not to return before the problem was solved. The Takhore Saheb showing no sign of being prepared to give way, Gandhi began, on the 3rd of March, a fast of indefinite duration. His life was at stake. The next day Gandhi asked the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, to intervene. The Chief Justice, Sir Maurice Gwyer, was appointed as arbitrator. All Satyagrahi prisoners were freed and Gandhi broke his fast on the 7th of March. However, a negotiated settlement could not be reached: the Takhore remained stubborn and Gandhi, who was left in doubt as to whether he had been justified in acting as he did, took the matter no further.

*

The manoeuvres to oust Bose from the leadership of the Indian National Congress and the fight against the Takhore spoilt Kallenbach's stay as much as did malaria. They had taken precedence over the willingness to help achieve a peaceful solution of the conflict between Arabs and Jews.

13

Disengagement

Gandhi was caught in a cleft stick and had to recognize realities. He could no more ignore Jinnah than Britain could dismiss Roosevelt. From the beginning of August to the end of December 1938, an exchange of letters between Jinnah and Bose, representing Congress, set out their differences.

Gandhi's limitations

At the special session of the Muslim League on the 17–18th April 1938, Jinnah had already claimed 'the status of complete equality with the Congress.'[1] He now insisted that the Muslim League, and the Muslim League only, was the 'authoritative and representative organization of the Mussalmans of India'. He demanded that the Indian National Congress abstain from nominating Muslims as their representatives.

How could Gandhi ever hope that Jinnah would tolerate Congress interference in Arab Palestine? There could not have been a more explicit denial of Gandhi's claim to speak for the Muslims.

Congress, undeterred, continued to pass resolutions on Palestine, at the All-India Congress Committee meeting in Delhi, on the 24–26th of September, and at the Working Committee at Wardha, on the 11–16th of December 1938.

The Muslim League was not to be outdone. At its 26^{th} session at Patna on the $26–29^{th}$ of December, one month after the article on 'The Jews' in *Harijan*, Palestine was debated. One delegate suggested that Germany and Italy be invited to intervene in Palestine. Another produced shrapnel and cartridges used against the Arabs. Some Muslim spokesmen went as far as to identify Gandhi with the Jews. Professor Abdul Sattar Khairi said:

> that both the British and the Hindus were Jews to Muslims, that is, their enemies. In India, Mr. Gandhi was the leader of the Hindu Jews.[2]

Jinnah did not approve of that line of thought and reprimanded another delegate who declared:

> The real Jews of the West were the British, and those of the East were the Hindus, and both were the sons of Shylock.[3]

The resolution on Palestine passed at the end of the debate singled out Britain as the culprit. It ran as follows:

> British sympathy for Jews: a pretext for incorporating Palestine in the British Empire . . . and frustrating the idea of a federation of Arab states and its possible union with Muslim states. They also want the sacred places of Palestine . . . for future military activities. The atrocities that they have perpetrated on the Arabs for the attainment of their object, have no parallel in history.

The resolution also called for a stop to the influx of Jewish immigration in Palestine. It concluded with the warning:

> The problem of Palestine is the problem of Muslims of the whole world. If Britain persists to make Palestine a

national home for Jews, it will lead to perpetual unrest and conflict.[4]

*

The Indian National Congress met the challenge at its 52nd session at Tripuri on the 10–12th of March 1939, using a similar vocabulary:

> . . . unnamable atrocities committed by the British Army and Police . . . struggle for national freedom . . . fight against British Imperialism . . . reign of terror . . . courage, determination and sacrifices made by the Arabs . . . admiration of Indians . . . good wishes in the attainment of their objective .. sympathy for the plight of Jews in Europe and elsewhere who should not rely on British armed forces to advance their special privileges and thus align themselves on the side of British Imperialism.[5]

This vocabulary sounded more Nehruan than Gandhian. Gandhi's influence can, however, be traced in the Tripuri resolution on Palestine as well as in the previous Congress resolutions of September and December 1938 passed by the All-India Congress Committee and the Congress Working Committee.

The 1938 September resolution had declared, Gandhi-like:

> . . . leave the Jews and the Arabs to amicably settle the issues between them and appeals to the Jews not to take shelter behind British Imperialism (All-India Congress Committee, September 1938).[6]

The 1938 December text was more explicit:

> Trust that Arabs and Jews will endeavour to find a basis for direct cooperation with a view to establishing a free democratic state in Palestine with adequate protection of

> Jewish rights. (Congress Working Committee, Wardha, 11–16th of December 1938).[7]

This was a reversal of the terms of the Balfour Declaration, which was concerned with the protection of the rights of non-Jewish communities in the proposed Jewish home.[8]

The Tripuri resolution of the 52nd session of the Indian National Congress (10–12th of March 1939) reproduced the December resolution of the Working Committee changing none but one word: a 'free democratic state' became an 'independent democratic state'.[9]

It is the last resolution on Palestine in Gandhi's lifetime, a fact worth of notice, which is to be explained by an event in that same month of March 1939.

The farewell meeting of March 22nd, 1939

The Round Table Conference on Palestine had ended, inconclusively, on the 17th of March 1939. It was time for Gandhi to turn away from any further involvement in the problems of Palestine. It was having too negative an effect in India itself.

The decision to call a halt was taken in mid-March 1939. On leaving Rajkot after his fast and two days before the Tripuri session, Gandhi, who had not returned to Segaon, asked Kallenbach, by now fully recovered, to join him in Delhi before leaving for South Africa, not so much to visit the capital as to decide what to do about Palestine.

The brief note from Gandhi to Kallenbach, written on a silent day sometime after the 15th of March 1939, simply said:

> We must talk a little before finally deciding.[10]

The 'final decision' was taken at that meeting. Gandhi had summoned not only Kallenbach, but also Andrews, his two

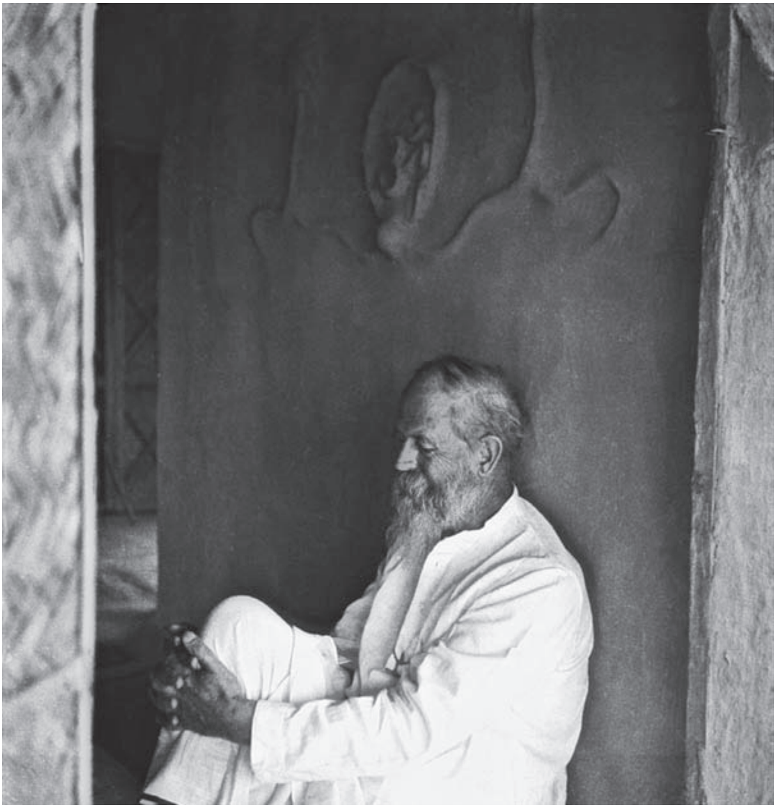


Figure 6: C.F. Andrews, the fifth mediator enrolled in July 1937, relaxing in Gandhi's ashram in 1939.

secretaries, Mahadev Desai and Pyarelal, Shohet, the editor of the Jewish Advocate (official organ of the Bombay Zionist Association) and Joseph Nevidi, the Town Clerk of Tel Aviv, who had been sent to India by the Jewish Agency to collect funds.

What the 'final decision' was all about is a matter which is debatable. Little is known about it.

*

Gandhi began the meeting ruling out any discussion of his message to the Jews – it belonged to the past. He simply reaffirmed his sympathy for the Jews, but, looking forward, declared that he was no longer able to render them any assistance. Whatever he did or said to help them would be distorted by the Muslim League, and any move on his part would be counter-productive for the Jews. He insisted that the minutes of the meeting should make no reference to either the Muslims or the League.[11]

Shimoni reports what Shohet, in his letter dated the 24th of March 1939 wrote to Epstein, his contact in the Political Department of the Jewish Agency:

> He has been frank with us about the part the Muslims play in the question, though as is evident he will not say anything about it, even in the minutes of a private interview . . . He is receptive. He is also shrewd.[12]

The only other known comment on the meeting is the sybilline remark by Isa Sarid in her biography of Kallenbach – her great-uncle – namely that Gandhi's position was 'irreversible.'[13]

*

On the 31st of March 1939, Kallenbach took his leave from Gandhi – for the last time. He had spent the final week, disturbed and saddened.

'He was fretting', had written Gandhi to his princess Amrit Kaur.[14]

The friends never met again. They were separated by the war, by the demands made on Gandhi by the struggle for Indian independence, by Gandhi's imprisonment, and finally by old age. According to Isa Sarid, Kallenbach had become an old man, deeply disappointed – disappointed with himself. Did he regret having sacrificed a Gandhian way of life – or rather a life with Gandhi – to family obligations? In Isa Sarid's opinion there was no alternative but to return and provide for his relatives – herself included – who had joined him in exile from Germany in the 1920s. In any case he had aged too much for life in a kibbutz.

On the 18th of September 1944 Gandhi wrote to Kallenbach wondering if there was any chance of seeing him again in India, but Kallenbach died six months later, on the 25th of March 1945, three years before Gandhi.

*

Andrews, in poor health, was taken to hospital on the 2nd of April 1939 and died the following year.

Mahadev Desai died in prison during the Second World War.

Pyarelal, abetted in his master's secrecy, suppressed whatever could be used against him, not only when drafting the minutes of the meetings, but also when filing Gandhi's papers.

The 1939 White Paper

The Round Table having ended inconclusively, the British Government published two months later, on the 17th of May 1939, a White Paper setting out its intentions, short-term and long-term. Its ultimate objective was 'the establishment within ten years of an independent Palestinian state'. It 'should be one

in which Arabs and Jews share in government in such a way as to ensure that the essential interests of each community are safeguarded' – a goal to be achieved progressively by the appointment of Jewish and Arab leaders, first as Heads of Departments advising the High Commissioner, then at a later stage as Ministers. The nomination of Jews and Arabs in government was to be 'approximately in proportion to their respective populations'. An elective legislature was not being proposed 'at this stage.'

These proposals left all eyes focused on the question of immigration. From 1936 there had already been a sharp decline in the number of authorized immigrants, from 61,800 in 1935 to 12,800 in 1938 and 16,400 in 1939. What would be the proportion of Arabs to Jews in ten years time? The White Paper set out the two alternative policies which would determine relative numbers.

> (i) to seek to expand the Jewish National Home indefinitely by immigration against the strongly expressed will of the Arab people in the country
>
> or (ii) to permit further expansion of the Jewish National Home by immigration only if the Arabs are prepared to acquiesce in it.

The White Paper left no doubt as to which was to be the preferred policy. In a passage that echoes Gandhi's 1937 statement to Shertok, the first alternative was rejected, on the grounds that it

> means rule by force . . . The relations between the Arabs and Jews must be based sooner or later on mutual tolerance and good will: the peace, security and progress of the Jewish National Home itself requires this.[15]

A quota of 75,000 was set for the first five years 1939–43, and a separate five-year quota of 25,000 for urgent cases. Thereafter immigration policy was to be an Arab responsibility. It was calculated that in ten years' time, the population of Palestine would be 2/3 Arab and 1/3 Jew. The White Paper also dealt with the question of land purchase, by restricting it to certain parts of Palestine.

Reactions to the 1939 White Paper

Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, had told his ministerial colleagues dealing with Palestine: 'If we must offend one side, let us offend the Jews rather than the Arabs.'[16]

The White Paper certainly offended Jewish opinion yet failed to secure unequivocal Arab approval. The Grand Mufti, as usual, led the opposition, the Nashashibis dissenting. Most Arab States, although ready to accept the British proposals, followed the lead of the Higher Arab Committee.

Jewish reaction was no surprise. The prospect of being a permanent minority in the land and in government was totally unacceptable to the yishuv. Weizmann had claimed more immigrants after the pogrom of Kristallnacht. He had told Sir Archibald Sinclair, a Liberal leader, on the 20th of November 1938:

> We could easily take now into Palestine 50,000 people if they would let us. We could employ them and all the untold money which is being spent on giving these people temporary shelter could be used effectively for settling them permanently in Palestine. But they don't let us and here is the tragedy!

Weizmann still hoped to be able to cooperate with the British. But Ben Gurion was blunt:

> For us the White Paper does not exist.[17]

He envisaged an 'immigration rebellion.'

> We will bring thousands of young people from Germany, Austria and other countries and confront the English with the necessity of either shooting the refugees or sending them back.

He thought that 'such an operation would have the world up in arms, led by public opinion in the United States.'[18]

*

Ben Gurion had also considered, behind closed doors, another possibility, that of a Satyagraha campaign. There was support for civil disobedience against certain laws, those concerning immigration and the founding of new settlements.

The British army and police knew of those plans shortly before the publication of the 1939 White Paper:

> The British Army Commander in Palestine, General Robert Haining once warned (Charles) Tegart (in charge of the police and security forces) that David Ben Gurion was liable to adopt *Gandhi's policy and stop co-operating* with the authorities.[19] [italics added]

*

The Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations added its voice. It was of the opinion

> that the policy set out in the White Paper was not in accordance with the interpretation which, in agreement with the Mandatory Power and the Council, the Commission had placed upon the Palestinian mandate.

However, war intervened, preventing the Council of the League of Nations from ruling on the legality or otherwise of the 1939 White Paper. Consequently the legality of the White Paper was never clarified. In any case the new policy would not survive the war.

*

The White Paper, in effect, dug its own grave. Although force had been ruled out as a means of overcoming Arab opposition to continual Jewish immigration, force was used to impose the strict limits on immigration set out in the White Paper. It was totally inadequate given the numbers fleeing persecution in Europe. While some managed to enter illegally, others, not so lucky, were forcibly shipped elsewhere, or arrested. There were armed clashes between British troops and Jewish terrorists, assassinations, executions and reprisals. While Jewish leaders naturally sided with Britain in the war against Hitler, they fought against British policy in Palestine. There was, for Ben Gurion, no dilemma. He declared:

> We will fight with the British against Hitler, as if there was no White Paper; we will fight the White Paper as if there was no war.[20]

14

An Almost Insoluble Problem

Gandhi

The appointment of Churchill as Prime Minister in May 1940 put the British Government policy on Palestine once more in abeyance. Churchill had voted against the adoption of the 1939 White Paper, calling it a betrayal, and so had Labour Members of Parliament. It could be confidently assumed that changes would be made. Indeed Churchill had given Weizmann that assurance.

The problem in the hands of Churchill and Attlee

> In mid-December 1939 Chaim Weizmann called on Winston Churchill at the Admiralty and claimed that after the war the Zionists would want to build up a state of three to four million Jews in Palestine; Churchill replied that such a plan met with his entire approval.[1]

In 1942, at a Zionist meeting in New York – the Biltmore Conference – Weizmann and Ben Gurion sought to secure a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine, by opening wide the gates and handing control of immigration to the Jewish Agency.

Churchill did in fact initiate a change of policy. This was entrusted to a ministerial committee in July 1943 and kept secret.

> The work of the Committee remained *one of the best-kept secrets of the war*, which even the U. S. Office of Strategic Services failed to crack. The committee of six Ministers reported in December 1943. With one exception, they all favoured the solution of a clear-cut partition. In the words of the report 'partition offers the best and possibly the only final solution of the Palestinian problem.' The committee urged 'utmost secrecy' so that when the cut came, it would be 'swift and clean', ending, so it was hoped, once and for all the Palestinian problem by reconciling, in so far as humanly possible, the differences of the Jews and the Arabs.[2] [italics added]

The War Cabinet approved the committee's report in January 1944 but no further action was taken, Anthony Eden opposing the idea of partition.[3] The assassination by Jewish terrorists of Lord Moyne, Resident Minister in Cairo and one of Churchill's closest friends, was dissuasive. Churchill's defeat in the 1945 General Elections was a knock-out blow.

Policy now lay with the Labour Government, with Clement Attlee and his Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin. The latter was adamantly in favour of establishing a bi-national state in Palestine but Attlee was concerned primarily with achieving an orderly withdrawal from both India and Palestine. He had stressed, in a meeting of the Cabinet on the 20th of September 1947 their '*close parallel*.'[4] [italics added]. Wavell, who was the one but last Viceroy, made the same remark in early 1947, shortly before Indian independence:

> The real fatal thing for us would be to hang on to responsibility (in India) when we had lost the power to exercise it, and possibly to involve ourselves in *a large-scale Palestine*.[5] [italics added]

As in Palestine so in India

There was indeed a parallel. Jews in Palestine and Muslims in India were making similar claims. Because they felt and were different from the rest of the population, they looked forward to having a state of their own, a Jewish state in Palestine, a Muslim state in India. And who was to grant them their wishes, if not the same political power, called Mandatory Power in the one case and Empire in the other?

Both claims led to partition, and both claims matured at the same time, within a year of each other, despite resistance from the Muslims in Palestine and from the non-Muslims in India.

In the end, there was no alternative to partition, neither in India nor in Palestine. Jinnah might well complain about 'a moth-eaten Pakistan' and Weizmann about a mini-state; nonetheless they both grabbed it eagerly when it was offered.

> If there was one point more than any other that the Labour Government consistently upheld, it was not to engage military units. Humanitarian considerations in India paled before that basic preoccupation, as they did in Palestine. The remarkable feature of these massive disengagements from India and Palestine, and, it should be added, Greece, is that British forces emerged virtually unscathed.[6]

Yet, there was one vital difference – in the manner of British withdrawal. In India, the Viceroy Mountbatten was able to broker a political settlement prior to withdrawal. This enabled Britain to make a formal transfer of authority, in India to Nehru and Congress, in Pakistan to Jinnah and the Muslim League, and to welcome them both into the Commonwealth – a feat Churchill greatly appreciated.

In Palestine, it was quite otherwise. The Labour Government, despairing of securing any agreement to its preferred policy, a bi-national state, decided unilaterally, in February 1947, to refer the problem to the United Nations. The U.N.'s solution, partition, merely re-ignited Jewish-Arab hostilities, whereupon the British Government took the self-protective decision to renounce the Mandate. A date for withdrawal was announced: 15th of May 1948 (later changed to 14th of May 1948).

However orderly in one case, and desperate in the other, both withdrawals had the same sequence: both countries were soon engulfed in violence, killings and refugee problems. Gandhi's assassination on the 30th of January 1948 happened between the two events, as if he could not get away from the creation of a Jewish state and that of Pakistan.

Gandhi in and after the war

The war had separated not only Gandhi and Kallenbach, but also, in Gandhi's mind, India from Palestine. From then on, Gandhi was wed to one issue only, that of India. Palestine receded into the background.

In 1939, the British Government had declared itself at war with Germany, and ipso facto, so was the British Empire, including India. The Indian National Congress resented not having been consulted, and its High Command, as a mark of protest, ordered all the party's Provincial Ministers to resign.

This did not signal unwillingness to cooperate in the war. Congress did, however make conditions, conditions which the British Government never fully met, with the result that Gandhi led two Satyagraha campaigns, the first in 1940–1 demanding free speech – a low key individual protest – and the second in 1942–3: the Quit India Campaign, a full blown rebellion, including not so non-violent means such as sabotage and derailments. All the Congress leaders found themselves in

prison until 1945, except for Gandhi, who was released a year earlier.

*

The war proved to be Jinnah's opportunity. The Muslim League celebrated the end of Congress power in the Provinces with 'a day of deliverance'. The Viceroy, in need of Indian support, courted Jinnah. On the 23rd of March 1940, the Muslim League declared its hand, demanding the creation of Pakistan, a demand which echoed that of the Jews in Palestine: a land for a home, a state for a nation, with its own religion, culture and language – to wit, a clear territorial differentiation from the neighbouring and opposing religion, culture and language.

When the British and the Indians did finally sit down to discuss independence, Jinnah had as good a claim to independence as Gandhi and Nehru, and Gandhi would have to settle for swaraj without first achieving Hindu-Muslim unity.

The third Zionist attempt at convincing Gandhi: March 8th, 1946

Zionist leaders were reluctant to accept Gandhi's *Harijan* letter to 'The Jews' as his final word. He had, however, little more to say, at least publicly. He did receive privately on the 8th of March 1946, Honick, the President of the World Jewish Congress, and Sidney Silverman, a Labour Member of Parliament and a good friend of the Indian cause, who had come to canvass support for the establishment of the Jewish National Home in Palestine.

What exactly Gandhi had to say – or not say – eventually became public knowledge, somewhat to Gandhi's embarrassment. Pyarelal attended the meeting as usual and wrote up a report, which Gandhi endorsed, but

> scribbled instructions on it in Gujerati that although he found it very satisfactory, *for the time he did not wish to publish it.*[7] [italics added]

Pyarelal's report began and ended with a clear statement of Gandhi's self-confessed 'limitations', namely that he was being denied the right to speak on behalf of all Indian Muslims. His visitors were told:

> You have come to the wrong person. I work within my own *limitations*. What I would say to you therefore is that unless you can gain the ear of the Indian Mussalmans and their active support, I am afraid that there is nothing that can be done in India.[8]

The meeting ended with Gandhi repeating:

> But as I have already said, I have my *limitations*. I can only hope that a just solution may be found which will give satisfaction to the Jews. But after all our talk I am unable to revise the opinion I gave you in the beginning. You should see the Congress President (a Muslim) and Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah too and try to gain their sympathy. Unless you can get the active support of the Muslims nothing is possible in a substantial way in India.
>
> – 'It is well nigh impossible,' they remarked.
> – 'I do not minimize the difficulty,' replied Gandhi, 'but I won't say it is impossible.'
> – 'Would Mr. Jinnah listen? He won't.'
> – 'He may.'
> – 'Perhaps he may by the same token which he demands a Pakistan.'
> – 'You can tell him that also', said Gandhi, and they all had a hearty laugh.[9]

*

However, Gandhi's professed inability to be at all influential did not preclude him from expressing his opinion to the two Zionists, very privately, on the merits of Jewish claims to a homeland in Palestine. They had asked him, as recorded by Pyarelal:

> May we take it that you sympathize with our aspiration to establish a national home for the Jews?

Gandhi's answer to that question went unrecorded, but was eventually relayed to the ears of a well-known biographer and friend of Gandhi, the American journalist, Louis Fischer, himself a Jew. He lost no time in seeking confirmation of this from Gandhi himself. Fischer reported Gandhi telling him three months after the Silverman-Honick interview:

> The Jews have *a good case*. I told Sidney Silverman that the Jews have *a good case* in Palestine. If the Arabs have *a claim* in Palestine, the Jews have *a prior claim*.[10] [italics added]

In a later version, Fischer added:

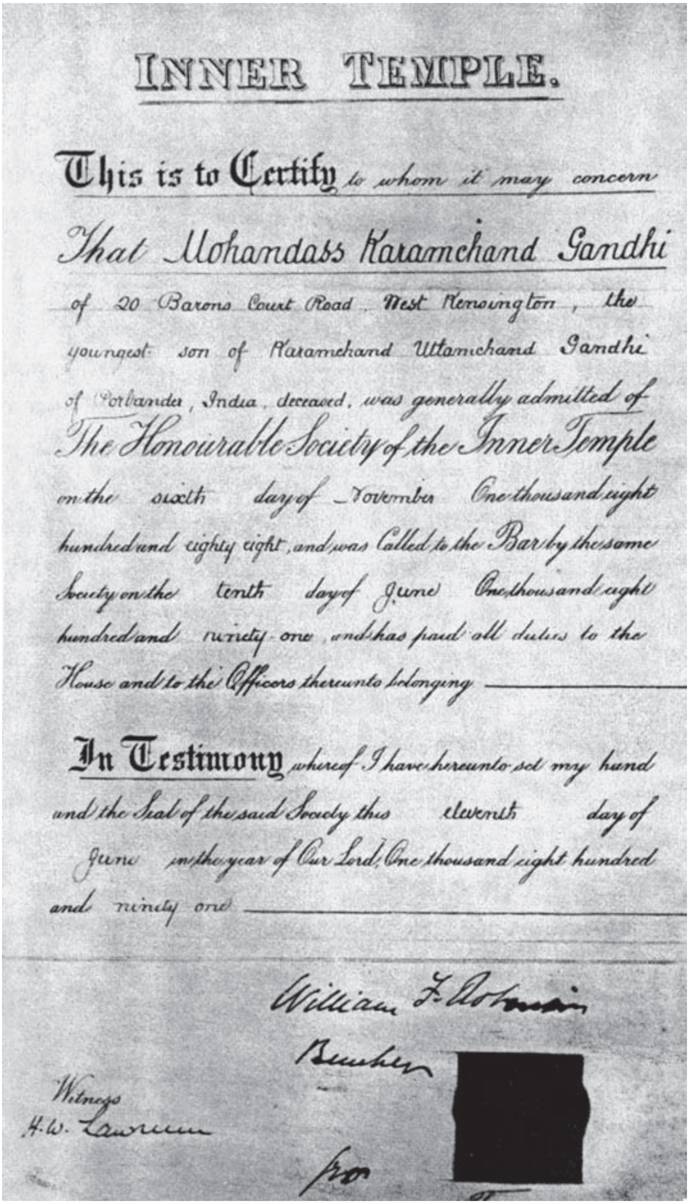
> *a prior claim*, *because* they were there first.[11]

*

This may have been what Gandhi meant by 'prior' claim. It is possible, however – and indeed likely, Gandhi being a lawyer – that it was used in its legal connotation, that is, 'a claim which is self-evident in the absence of evidence to the contrary'. This is to admit the possibility that there was evidence to the contrary, leaving the outcome uncertain.

More positive was the assertion that the Jews had a 'good case', meaning that there was sufficient evidence to support a legal position.[12]

*



INNER TEMPLE.

This is to Certify to whom it may concern
That Mohandass Karamchand Gandhi
of 20 Barons Court Road West Kensington, the
youngest son of Karamchand Uttamchand Gandhi
of Porbandar, India, deceased, was generally admitted of
The Honourable Society of the Inner Temple
on the sixth day of November One thousand eight
hundred and eighty eight, and was Called to the Bar by the same
Society on the tenth day of June One thousand eight
hundred and ninety one and has paid all duties to the
House and to the Officers thereunto belonging

In Testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand
and the Seal of the said Society this eleventh day of
June in the year of Our Lord One thousand eight hundred
and ninety one

William F. Robinson
Bencher

Witness
H.W. Lawrence

FIGURE 7: Certificate of Gandhi's admission to the Inner Temple, authorizing him to practise at the Bar on the 10th of June 1891.

The unwelcome disclosure that Gandhi had given such positive support to the Jewish case obliged him to make his own public statement. This was written on the 14th of July 1946 and appeared in *Harijan* on the 21st.

> Hitherto I have refrained practically from saying anything in public regarding the Jew-Arab controversy. I have done so for good reasons . . . But four lines from a newspaper column have done the trick and evoked a letter from a friend who has sent me a cutting which I would have missed but for the friend drawing my attention to it. *It is true that I did say some such thing in the course of a long conversation with Mr. Louis Fischer on the subject* . . . But, in my opinion, they (the Jews) have erred grievously in seeking to impose themselves on Palestine with the aid of America and Britain and now with the aid of naked terrorism . . . If they were to adopt the matchless weapon of non-violence . . . their case would be the world's.[13] [italics added]

Brief and last encounter with Olsvanger

Gandhi and Olsvanger met for a second time in March 1947, one year after Gandhi's interview with Silverman and Honick. The well-known poetess and Congress leader, Sarojini Naidu, who had been of great assistance to Immanuel Olsvanger on his earlier visit in 1936, had convened the first Inter-Asian Conference and had invited the University of Jerusalem to send a five-member delegation. This included, beside Olsvanger, two other Jewish Agency officials, Yaakov Shimoni and David Hacohen. Together they sought a meeting with Gandhi.

When they met, they were told abruptly, twice:

> Put me out of the picture.

He warned them that:

> If they insisted that he say something about the Palestine question, his words would necessarily be directed mainly against terrorism. Therefore it would be better for their sake to leave him out of the picture.[14]

They had spent no more than ten minutes in Gandhi's company. Olsvanger, unlike Silvermann, walked out empty-handed. He could not get anything out of the 'Lämmel.'

Ends and means

Nine months before his assassination at the hands of a fanatic, at the end of January 1948, Gandhi insisted once again on the requirements of non-violence and tolerance, of compromise also, to solve the conflict between Arabs and Jews.

For the Arabs he had this short message on the 1st of May 1947, published in *The Hindu*:

> The Jews are a persecuted people worthy of world sympathy and India sympathizes with them. They are energetic, intelligent and progressive. The Arabs are a great people with a great history and therefore if they provide refuge for the Jews without the mediation of any nation, it will be in their tradition of generosity.[15]

For the Jews, he published the answer he gave to a Reuters correspondent, in *Harijan*, the 18th of May 1947 – the last time he mentioned the subject in this paper:

> It has become *a problem which is almost insoluble.* If I were a Jew, I would tell them: 'Don't be so silly as to resort to terrorism, because you simply damage your own case

which otherwise would be *a proper case.* If it is just political hankering then I think there is no value in it. Why should they hanker after Palestine? They are a great race and have great gifts. I have lived with the Jews many years in South Africa. If it is a religious longing then surely terrorism has no place. They should meet the Arabs, make friends with them, and not depend on British aid or any aid, save what descends from Jehovah.'[16]

*

The recurrent theme in Gandhi's many pronouncements is the interconnection between ends and means.

This is exactly the point. The ends do not justify the means. The means are all-important. The conformity between ends and means was for Gandhi crucial. His recognition that the Jews had a good case and a prior claim in no way validated attempts to impose that claim by force.

Gandhi preached not only non-violent means but a conciliatory approach in a spirit of love for the enemy. The denunciation of violence and the insistence on conciliation go hand in hand.

Non-violence is the translation of the word *ahimsa* or love. A-himsa means no-harm, 'a' having the same function as the 'a' in Greek, as for instance in the word a-gnostic. 'Non-violence' is therefore a better translation of the word 'ahimsa' than 'love', which to-day is often debased and made to sound vulgar.

This kind of ahimsa, Gandhian love, means more than a no to violence. It is essentially a no to hate, the negation of hate, helping to heal wounds and resolve conflicts.

Their (the Jews') non-violence, if it may be so-called, is of the helpless and the weak.

What I have pleaded for is the renunciation of violence of

> the heart and consequent active exercise of the force generated by the great renunciation.[17]

*

The *Bombay Chronicle* on the 2nd of June 1947 records Gandhi's last words on Palestine. He was asked by a journalist from United Press from America what he felt would be the most acceptable solution to the Palestine problem. Gandhi's answer stressed the choice of means:

> The abandonment wholly by the Jews of terrorism and other forms of violence.[18]

*

– The solution then?
– Select non-violent means with care, shrewdness and 'freshness of mind'[19]. Train the masses in their use. Find inspired leadership – generalship, as Gandhi once said – to show the way[20]. Stay rooted in non-violence and grow, sucking the sap of no-hatred.

*

But in Palestine, violence and hatred prevailed. The problem truly became 'almost insoluble.'

And so it remains today.

Conclusion

A Love Affair in the Middle East

The title of this book could have been, more dramatically, 'Gandhi's love affair with the Middle-East'.

The last dot having been put to the last chapter, it is sad to conclude that, as in so many love-stories, there is no happy ending. There is no concluding sentence, such as in the fairy tales: . . . and the Jews and the Arabs 'lived together happily in peace ever after.' That is sad, so sad for the city of *shalom* and *salam*. Gandhi would never say what he would have loved to say: 'I mediated peace for thy walls, o Jeru-*salem*.'

*

The Arabs would not heed his promptings to make a deal with the Jews. What was Gandhi to the Palestinian Arabs? Taking no heed of the Ali brothers, they had not fought at Gandhi's side during the Caliphate campaign. In any case the Turks sank the Caliphate and the Alis fell out with Gandhi. Later, the Arabs from the Middle-East, from Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and as far as Yemen, lent their ear, not to Gandhi, but to their brothers in faith led by Jinnah.

However soft a line Gandhi adopted with them, however strongly the Indian National Congress gave support in their favour, no thanks were received in return, no reward. Pleasing the Arabs was a thankless task. Another more attractive, blue-

eyed suitor, of Aryan demeanour was courting Arab nationalism, namely the extremist and pro-nazi leader enthroned as Grand Mufti by the Mandatory Power. Hadj Amin al-Husseini was not a person likely to reach a compromise with Gandhi. The slogan, 'the British to the sea, the Jews to the graves', was his anti non-violent statement par excellence, and it was meant to be so.

Gandhi excused their violence on the ground that it was a justifiable response to the Jewish immigrants' invasion of their land. This did not go unnoticed by the Jews who accused him of being biased, that is, of having one set of values for the Arabs, and another more stringent for the Jews.

A truthful love relationship between Gandhi and the Arab world never gained a foothold beyond the high mountain ridges of Afghanistan, never embraced the Middle East. However strong and reciprocal Gandhi's friendship for Abdul Ghaffar Khan, however robust the connection with the many thousands Khudai Kidmatgars or Red Shirts, the fierce Pathan tribe, Gandhi carried no weight in Arab Middle East.

The Muslim League, in the guise of a chaperone, ensured that any unwelcome attentions would remain fruitless. Under threat of retaliation from the League, Gandhi refrained from taking action on this issue.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan, outvoted in the National Congress on the issue of partition, was left stranded in a Pakistan he had opposed, and paid the heavy penalty – long years of imprisonment.

*

Gandhi's love story with the Jews was on a different plane. Dismissed by the Arabs as irrelevant, Gandhi was – and still is – much misunderstood by the Jews. They did not appreciate his counsels and did not think of them as pertinent. They much resented his advice to put their trust in Arab goodwill and

offered no thanks for his sympathy and compassion. As far as they were concerned, that was the end of the story. They were not going to be drowned in the Dead Sea for his sake, nor thrown off from cliffs without a fight. As obstinate as Gandhi himself, they were going to achieve their independence in spite of the Arabs and in spite of the British; and so they did.

Twice Gandhi intervened. Ignored on the first occasion when he would have had the Jews abandon British support, he was vilified on the second for his reaction to Kristallnacht, which – unsurprisingly – brought him outrage, scorn and criticism from the Jewish world. This was enough to stop any further Gandhian move on the Palestinian chessboard.

It could even be argued that, the more favourably Gandhi looked at his beloved Jerusalem, the more constrainted he felt, as the years went by, to keep his ardour to himself. He had possibly overstepped the mark in admitting to Silverman and Honick that the Jews had 'a good case' – an admission that Kallenbach, had he been still alive, might have persuaded Gandhi to amplify, but which was denied Olsvanger.

*

Gandhi also loved the British, and he loved them as he fought them. He had the knack of standing up to people he admired. He wanted 'a boy from Harrow' – namely Nehru – to lead independent India, and so it happened.

But Gandhi did not like the Mandate, nor any mandate, nor anything to do with colonialism. This put the Jews in a difficult position and made any agreement in Palestine improbable, if not impossible. The Jews clung to the British as long as the British helped them to consolidate their positions, a modus vivendi which, on the declaration of war against Germany, became a veritable alliance on the Jews' part, providing for them, at the same time, the nucleus of a future army and air force.

At the end of the Mandate, the Jews had shifted their British allegiance as Gandhi had asked them to, and had turned against the Mandatory Power, not because of Gandhi's advice, but because of the obstinate policy of the 1939 White Paper on immigration. European Jews who had survived the Holocaust and the war, were not given permission to land in Palestine. Some ships were sunk, or sent back; illegal immigrants were arrested and interned in Mauritius or Cyprus or Palestine; ship owners and some Eastern European Governments were pressurized into stopping the flux of the immigrants from their ports. Their efforts went to great lengths, all to no avail, because they left the Arabs dissatisfied and unmoved.

*

Love affair is no misnomer. It is a good and appropriate expression to describe Gandhi's tribulations in the Middle East at the time of the Mandate, especially if one bears in mind that, in the Gandhian vocabulary, love equals non-violence (spelling non-violence in two words reminds us better of the synonymy). A love affair, it was, lived as an adventure in the meanders of other people's problems, gripped in their sorrows, but glowing from the warm feeling of fondness.

Gandhi's solution relied heavily on the Jews practising what he preached, that is, resistance in a non-violent way, whether in Palestine or Germany. The Jews did not appreciate his proposals and understandably took offence. They were not prepared to commit mass suicide, as they saw it, even if Gandhi later made an off-the-cuff remark to the effect that they might as well have tried his method, given that they had suffered genocide in Europe anyway.

However, especially after the Holocaust became common knowledge, the stereotype of a Jew was transformed into that of a resilient warrior. Leaving terrorism aside, this was exactly the type of man that Gandhi wished for his Satyagrahis, the

type of man he had found and so much appreciated in the 'fiery' Pathans of Abdul Ghaffar Khan.

If Gandhi hated anything, it was cowardice. His non-violence was that of the brave. Courage and fortitude were the substance of his non-violence. In advising non-violent action to the Jews, he was showing his high regard for the endurance and capability of potential Kallenbachs.

*

It was in the heights of the North-Frontier, with Abdul Ghaffar Khan 'sitting in front of me as I pen these lines', that Gandhi suggested non-violent resistance to the Czechs, in an issue of *Harijan* dated 15th of October 1938. He had always treasured his Satyagraha experience in South Africa. What he did then, they could do now:

> I present Dr. Benes with a weapon not of the weak but of the brave.[1]

In the same article entitled 'If I were a Czech', Gandhi explained to the Czechs what he meant by the non-violence of the brave. Referring to the Khudai Khidmatgars of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, with whom he was staying, he wrote:

> My purpose will be fulfilled if I succeed in reaching these men's hearts and making them see that *if their non-violence does not make them feel much braver* than the possession of arms and the ability to use them *they must give up their non-violence* which is another name for cowardice, *and resume their arms* which there is nothing but their own will to prevent them from taking back. [italics added]

Like the kings of old, Gandhi was ready to send the Czechs his dearest son, to lead and organize their resistance. Or rather, his

spiritual daughter, whom he thought well equipped for the task, that is, if she could 'stand the continental winter.'[2]

Madeleine Slade – alias Mirabehn – had impeccable credentials. Socially well-connected, dressed in khadi, head shaven, conspicuous among the ashram womenfolk, a Beethoven fan, she imbibed from her public school days the art of self-reliance, a hatred for lies, a devotion to duty, and later to non-violence.

She probably saved Gandhi's life on a train journey, as bravely and non-violently as she could in the circumstances. This is how, in her own words:

> The halt I shall never forget was the halt at Sukkur. It was in the middle of the night. A big students' demonstration was waiting ready on the platform . . . They made a veritable assault on the compartment, doing their best to burst in through the doors. Besides Bapu and Ba, we were a party of about four. The men held the doors, which seemed about to give way any moment, and I was keeping guard at the windows, when suddenly a student, with his hands all bleeding, burst in through the lavatory door. He had smashed the lavatory window glass and squeezed himself trough. I dashed into the closet, to find another student with his head already through the hole in the window, and more students waiting outside to follow him. There was no time to stop and think about methods. I seized him by the hair and shoving my thumb into his neck on the windpipe, managed to bring him to a halt. The madness of the assault slightly lessened . . . We all thanked God when the train moved out of the station.[3]

One month later, Gandhi wrote to his secretary, Mahadev Desai, about the Czech project entrusted to Mirabehn, giving two reasons why

> her going can do no harm at all. While she has to suppress herself with me, in the West she can work independently. *There is no limit to her courage*.[4] [italics added]

*

For these reasons Gandhi objected strongly to Satyagraha being called passive resistance. He was not one to be cowed. He was very much a non-violent warrior, a kind of martial arts expert.

Seen in this light, non-violence offers itself as a new kind of self-defence, akin to the best of martial arts. The less violence, the greater the skill. Satyagraha aims at that perfection; aims, but does not reach. As there are degrees in love and in hatred, so there are, in non-violence, degrees in successful achievements.

Gandhi's accomplishments can be judged on that scale. His courting in the Middle East brought him nothing but unrequited love, portrayed, as in a ballad, by the following Envoy.

Envoy

The Rose, the Lily, the Lilac and the Lotus

> I may well believe that the rose is the most beautiful of flowers without having to, dutifully, spit on the lilies, or trample lilacs and violets, wild lilies-of-the-valley and the flowers in the field.[1]

Is reconciliation an impossible dream?

*

The pilgrim was shivering with emotion, in his joy to reach the gates of the holy city. Facing him the sanctuary of the Mount – the aim of his pilgrimage – in its walls enclosed, so real there, in front of his eyes, in its geographical dimensions, in its centuries-old history; so obtrusive there also, the political covetousness for the glory of its possession; and so susceptible to a spiritual mirage of her image beyond this world. Mirage or, should we say, spiritual reality?

Actually, there was not one, but three pilgrims at the gates, all three enjoying with delight the sight of the three-time blessed city. One had a rose, the other a lily and the third lilac. Together they went through the gate of the old town, made their way through the ancient, narrow, crowded alleys. When they reached the site of the old Temple, they separated. The pilgrim with the rose sat on the steps that had led to the Temple of Solomon, overlooking the city of David. The pilgrim

with the lily stood, facing the Wailing Wall, shaking his head reverently in the recitation of his psalmody. The pilgrim with the lilac climbed to the top, flattened, where the Temple destroyed by the Romans once stood, and prostrated between the golden Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

There, the three pilgrims adored the same God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying God is One, God is great, God is compassion, and, down there, at the huge foundation stones, the lily tuned its ear-like bloom, to recite the oneness: Shema, listen, Israel, . . .

And they started fighting, spitting, trampling the Garden of Eden.

Along shuffled a man with a lotus in his hand. He pleaded with them to stop. 'God is Love', he told them. But their passion for the place made them deaf. The very understanding of love had been, for them, debased. Their wilting love had lost its roots.

It is truly amazing that some Mahatma ever tried the recipe of non-violence in the political field. Not an easy one, obviously, to test and one that required not only conviction, but daring. But the Mahatma failed in the Middle East because of strictures at home. His hands were bound. In the end, helplessly, he watched in silence al-Quds, Jerusalem, the city of peace, of shalom, of salaam. His last pronouncement on the conflict in Palestine – 'an insoluble problem' – was this defeatist conclusion. Yet is the reconciliation such an impossible dream?

*

We are all pilgrims on this earth.
Fellow-pilgrim, won't you pick a flower with me?
For me, the rose of no-hate with the thorn of non-violence.

Document 1

The Jews
Harijan, November 26, 1938

Gandhi

Several letters have been received by me asking me to declare my views about the Arab-Jew question in Palestine and the persecution of the Jews in Germany. It is not without hesitation that I venture to offer my views on this very difficult question.

My sympathies are all with the Jews. I have known them intimately in South Africa. Some of them became life-long companions. Through these friends I came to learn much of their age-long persecution. They have been the untouchables of Christianity. The parallel between their treatment by Christians and the treatment of untouchables by Hindus is very close. Religious sanction has been invoked in both cases for the justification of the inhuman treatment meted out to them. Apart from the friendships, therefore, there is the more common universal reason for my sympathy for the Jews.

But my sympathy does not blind me to the requirements of justice. The cry for the national home for the Jews does not make much appeal to me. The sanction for it is sought in the Bible and the tenacity with which the Jews have hankered after return to Palestine. Why should they not, like other peoples of the earth, make that country their home where they are born and where they earn their livelihood?

Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French. It is wrong and inhuman to impose the Jews on the Arabs. What is going on in Palestine today cannot be justified by any moral code of conduct. The mandates have no sanction but that of the last war. Surely it would be a crime against humanity to reduce the proud Arabs so that Palestine can be restored to the Jews partly or wholly as their national home.

The nobler course would be to insist on a just treatment of the Jews wherever they are born and bred. The Jews born in France are French. If the Jews have no home but Palestine, will they relish the idea of being forced to leave the other parts of the world in which they are settled? Or do they want a double home where they can remain at will? This cry for the national home affords a colourable justification for the German expulsion of the Jews.

But the German persecution of the Jews seems to have no parallel in history. The tyrants of old never went so mad as Hitler seems to have gone. And he is doing it with religious zeal. For he is propounding a new religion of exclusive and militant nationalism in the name of which any inhumanity becomes an act of humanity to be rewarded here and hereafter. The crime of an obviously mad but intrepid youth is being visited upon his whole race with unbelievable ferocity. If there ever could be a justifiable war in the name of and for humanity, a war against Germany, to prevent the wanton persecution of a whole race, would be completely justified. But I do not believe in any war. A discussion of the pros and cons of such a war is therefore outside my horizon or province.

But if there can be no war against Germany, even for such a crime as is being committed against the Jews, surely there can be no alliance with Germany. How can there be alliance between a nation which claims to stand for justice and democracy and one which is the declared enemy of both? Or

is England drifting towards armed dictatorship and all it means?

Germany is showing to the world how efficiently violence can be worked when it is not hampered by any hypocrisy or weakness masquerading as humanitarianism. It is also showing how hideous, terrible and terrifying it looks in its nakedness.

Can the Jews resist this organised and shameless persecution? Is there a way to preserve their self-respect, and not to feel helpless, neglected and forlorn? I submit there is. No person who has faith in a living God need feel helpless or forlorn. Jehovah of the Jews is a God more personal than the God of the Christians, the Mussalmans or the Hindus, though as a matter of fact in essence, He is common to all and one without a second and beyond description. But as the Jews attribute personality to God and believe that He rules every action of theirs, they ought not to feel helpless. If I were a Jew and were born in Germany and earned my livelihood there, I would claim Germany as my home even as the tallest gentile German may, and challenge him to shoot me or cast me in the dungeon; I would refuse to be expelled or to submit to discriminating treatment. And for doing this, I should not wait for the fellow Jews to join me in civil resistance but would have confidence that in the end the rest are bound to follow my example. If one Jew or all the Jews were to accept the prescription here offered, he or they cannot be worse off than now. And suffering voluntarily undergone will bring them an inner strength and joy which no number of resolutions of sympathy passed in the world outside Germany can. Indeed, even if Britain, France and America were to declare hostilities against Germany, they can bring no inner joy, no inner strength. The calculated violence of Hitler may even result in a general massacre of the Jews by way of his first answer to the declaration of such hostilities. But if the Jewish mind could be prepared for voluntary suffering, even the massacre I have imagined could be turned into a day of

thanksgiving and joy that Jehovah had wrought deliverance of the race even at the hands of the tyrant. For to the god fearing, death has no terror. It is a joyful sleep to be followed by a waking that would be all the more refreshing for the long sleep.

It is hardly necessary for me to point out that it is easier for the Jews than for the Czechs to follow my prescription. And they have in the Indian Satyagraha campaign in South Africa an exact parallel. There the Indians occupied precisely the same place that the Jews occupy in Germany. The persecution had also a religious tinge. President Kruger used to say that the white Christians were the chosen of God and Indians were inferior beings created to serve the whites. A fundamental clause in the Transvaal constitution was that there should be no equality between the whites and coloured races including Asiatics. There too the Indians were consigned to ghettos described as locations. The other disabilities were almost of the same type as those of the Jews in Germany. The Indians, a mere handful, resorted to satyagraha without any backing from the world outside or the Indian Government. Indeed the British officials tried to dissuade the Satyagrahis from their contemplated step. World opinion and the Indian Government came to their aid after eight years of fighting. And that too was by way of diplomatic pressure not of a threat of war.

But the Jews of Germany can offer satyagraha under infinitely better auspices than the Indians of South Africa. The Jews are a compact, homogeneous community in Germany. They are far more gifted than the Indians of South Africa. And they have organised world opinion behind them. I am convinced that if someone with courage and vision can arise among them to lead them in non-violent action, the winter of their despair can in the twinkling of an eye be turned into the summer of hope. And what has today become a degrading man-hunt can be turned into a calm and determined stand offered by unarmed men and women possessing the strength of suffering

given to them by Jehovah. It will be then a truly religious resistance offered against the godless fury of dehumanised man. The German Jews will score a lasting victory over the German gentiles in the sense that they will have converted the latter to an appreciation of human dignity. They will have rendered service to fellow-Germans and proved their title to be the real Germans as against those who are today dragging, however unknowingly, the German name into the mire.

And now a word to the Jews in Palestine. I have no doubt that they are going about it in the wrong way. The Palestine of the Biblical conception is not a geographical tract. It is in their hearts. But if they must look to the Palestine of geography as their national home, it is wrong to enter it under the shadow of the British gun. A religious act cannot be performed with the aid of the bayonet or the bomb. They can settle in Palestine only by the goodwill of the Arabs. They should seek to convert the Arab heart. The same God rules the Arab heart who rules the Jewish heart. They can offer satyagraha in front of the Arabs and offer themselves to be shot or thrown into the Dead Sea without raising a little finger against them. They will find the world opinion in their favour in their religious aspiration. There are hundreds of ways of reasoning with the Arabs, if they will only discard the help of the British bayonet. As it is, they are co-sharers with the British in despoiling a people who have done no wrong to them.

I am not defending the Arab excesses. I wish they had chosen the way of non-violence in resisting what they rightly regarded as an unwarrantable encroachment upon their country. But according to the accepted canons of right and wrong, nothing can be said against the Arab resistance in the face of overwhelming odds.

Let the Jews who claim to be the chosen race prove their title by choosing the way of non-violence for vindicating their position on earth. Every country is their home including

Palestine not by aggression but by loving service. A Jewish friend has sent me a book called The Jewish Contribution to Civilisation by Cecil Roth. It gives a record of what the Jews have done to enrich the world's literature, art, music, drama, science, medicine, agriculture, etc. Given the will, the Jew can refuse to be treated as the outcaste of the West, to be despised or patronised. He can command the attention and respect of the world by being man, the chosen creation of God, instead of being man who is fast sinking to the brute and forsaken by God. They can add to their many contributions the surpassing contribution of non-violent action.

Segaon, November 20, 1938

Document 2

Jews and Palestine
Harijan, July 21, 1946

Gandhi

Hitherto I have refrained practically from saying anything in public regarding the Jew-Arab controversy. I have done so for good reasons. That does not mean any want of interest in the question, but it does mean that I do not consider myself sufficiently equipped with knowledge for the purpose. For the same reason I have tried to evade many world events. Without airing my views on them, I have enough irons in the fire. But four lines of a newspaper column have done the trick and evoked a letter from a friend who has sent me a cutting which I would have missed but for the friend drawing my attention to it. It is true that I did say some such thing in the course of a long conversation with Mr. Louis Fischer on the subject. I do believe that the Jews have been cruelly wronged by the world. 'Ghetto' is, so far as I am aware, the name given to Jewish locations in many parts of Europe. But for their heartless persecution, probably no question of return to Palestine would ever have arisen. The world should have been their home, if only for the sake of their distinguished contribution to it.

But, in my opinion, they have erred grievously in seeking to impose themselves on Palestine with the aid of America and Britain and now with the aid of naked terrorism. Their

citizenship of the world should have and would have made them honoured guests of any country. Their thrift, their varied talent, their great industry should have made them welcome anywhere. It is a blot on the Christian world that they have been singled out, owing to a wrong reading of the New Testament, for prejudice against them. 'If an individual Jew does a wrong, the whole Jewish world is to blame for it.' If an individual Jew like Einstein makes a great discovery or another composes unsurpassable music, the merit goes to the authors and not to the community to which they belong.

No wonder that my sympathy goes out to the Jews in their unenviably sad plight. But one would have thought adversity would teach them lessons of peace. Why should they depend upon American money or British arms for forcing themselves on an unwelcome land? Why should they resort to terrorism to make good their forcible landing in Palestine? If they were to adopt the matchless weapon of non-violence whose use their best Prophets have taught and which Jesus the Jew who gladly wore the crown of thorns bequeathed to a groaning world, their case would be the world's and I have no doubt that among the many things that the Jews have given to the world, this would be the best and the brightest. It is twice blessed. It will make them happy and rich in the true sense of the word and it will be a soothing balm to the aching world.

Panchagani, July 14, 1946

Notes

Chapter 1
The Enigma

1 Dr. Veena Choudhury, *Indian Nationalism and External Forces* (1920–1947), p.25 (Capital Publishing House, Delhi, 1985).
2 *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (CWMG), vol.19, p.444 (The Publication Division, Government of India).
3 *CWMG*, ibid, p.530.
4 *CWMG*, vol.48, October 2nd, 1931, p.106.
5 Bericht der Executive an den XVIII Zionisten Kongress, London, 1933, p.206, cited in a footnote in W. Laqueur, *History of Zionism,* p.498 (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1972).

It is also worth mentioning, at the end of the same year 1931, the presence in Jerusalem of Shaukat Ali, the Caliphatist leader, a 'brother' to Gandhi in the Caliphatist campaign, but now an estranged competitor. Shaukat Ali 'organised a World Islamic Conference in Jerusalem, with 130 delegates representing most of the Islamic world. It reaffirmed the sanctity to Islam of the Western Wall, condemned Zionism and land sales to Jews . . . The event effectively demonstrated pan-Muslim support for the Palestinians.' Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims*, *A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict,* 1881–1999, p.123 (John Murray Ltd).
6 See Chapter 14, p. 147–151.
7 *Harijan*, September 30th, 1939, vol.70, p.203.
8 *CWMG*, vol.96, Preface, August 1994.

Chapter 2
Tree by Tree, Acre by Acre

1 Dr. Veena Choudhury, *Indian Nationalism and External Forces* (1920–1947), op.cit., p.20.

2 Robert John and Sami Hadawi, *The Palestine Diary,* vol.1, 1914–1945, p. XIII (Palestine Research Center, 1970).
3 Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate,* p.304 (Little Brown & Co, 2000).
4 See Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (The Magnes Press, Jerusalem-London, 1983) on the answer to this question.
5 Martin Gilbert, *Israel, A History*, p.86 (Doubleday, 1998).
6 Ibid.
7 October 31st, 1917, Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, p.49.
8 Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration*, p.637.
9 Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, p.494.
10 Weizmann, in W. Laqueur, ibid, p.495.
1 dunam = 950 m^2.
11 Benjamin J. Israel, quoted by Margaret Chatterjee, *Gandhi and his Jewish Friends*, p.108 (London, 1992).
12 Ved Mehta, *Gandhi and his Apostles,* p.42 (Andre Deutsch Ltd, 1976).

Chapter 3
Palestine to the Arabs

1 See Document 1, *The Jews.*
2 Jawaharlal Nehru, *The First 60 Years,* vol.1, p.567 (Bodley Head, 1965).
3 See documents on the Indian National Congress, A.M. Zaidi, *Indian National Congress: The Glorious Tradition* (5 vol.), vol.3: 1928–1938 and vol.4: 1939–1950. Texts of the resolutions passed by the INC, the AICC and the CWC (Indian Institute of Applied Research, New-Delhi, 1987–1989).
4 See Document 1, *The Jews.*
5 Ibid.
6 Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration,* p.639.
7 Leonard Stein, ibid, p.565.
8 Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi,* p.436, *Harijan*, December 24th, 1938 (Grafton Books, London, 1982).
9 Gideon Shimoni, *Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews, A Formative Factor in India's Policy towards Israel*, p.31 (in Jerusalem Papers on Peace Problems, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, The Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, 1977).

Chapter 4
Briefing the Mahatma on Palestine

1 Chaim Weizmann was about thirty when he settled in England. His English was not fluent at that time. See T. Segev, ibid, p.39.

He was appointed Reader in chemistry at the University of Manchester. During the war he developped a method of producing acetone with maize, and acetone was then used in shells.

2 L. Stein, *The Balfour Declaration*, p.120.

3 Ben Gurion's *Memoirs* quoted in Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete,* p.392.

4 Wm. Roger Louis, *Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire,* 1941–1945, p.49 (Oxford University Press, 1977).

5 Shertok to Kallenbach, July 15th, 1936, *Central Zionist Archives:* S 25.3239, in Gideon Shimoni, *Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews*, p.28–29.

6 Kallenbach to Shertok, July 25th, 1936, ibid, p.29.

7 *Olsvanger Day by Day Diary in India*, *CZA*, S 25.3583, cited in Shimoni, ibid, p.29, note 66.

8 *CWMG*, vol.65, p.362.

9 Dr. Sarid's explanation refers to 'an arrangement whereby Hermann Kallenbach agreed that M. K. Gandhi should be the Upper House or decision-maker and Hermann Kallenbach would accept and respect the decision.' Letter Sarid to Chatterjee, April 28th, 1989, in M. Chatterjee, *Gandhi and his Jewish Friends*, p.69, note 32.

10 Kallenbach to Gandhi, in Margaret Chatterjee, *Gandhi and his Jewish Friends,* p.60.

11 Kallenbach to Gandhi, ibid, p.61–62.

Chapter 5
Palestine in 1936

1 See L. Stein, *The Balfour Declaration,* chapter 9, p.147.

2 Ibid, p.159–160.

3 G. Shimoni, *Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews*, p.31.

4 Article in *The New York Times* before the January 2006 Parliamentary elections, *Hamas seizes political opening: Islamic militants advance at expense of Abbas's Fatah.*

5 Elie Kedourie, *The Chatham Version and other Midle-Eastern Studies,* p.58 (University Press, New England, 1984).

6 Ibid, p.58.
7 See Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, p.227 about the choice of immigrants.
8 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881–1999*, p.130 (John Murray Ltd, London, 1999).
9 T. Segev on Ben Gurion's Memoirs, in *One Palestine, Complete*, p.376.
10 W. Laqueur, *History of Zionism*, p.249.
11 M. Gilbert, *Israel A History,* p.82.
12 Ibid, p.85.

Chapter 6
The Offer of July 4th, 1937

1 S.M. Burke and Salim Al-Din Quraishi, *The British Raj in India: An Historical Review*, p.195 (Oxford University Press, 1995).
2 G. Shimoni, Gandhi, *Satyagraha and the Jews*, p.25.
3 Ibid.
4 Correspondence: Gandhi to Kallenbach, *CWMG*, vol.96.
5 See Thomas Weber, a teacher of politics and peace studies at La Trobe University, on Lanza del Vasto (Shantidas as Gandhi called him) in his book: *Gandhi as Disciple and Mentor,* p.173–180 (Cambridge University Press, 2004).
6 Lanza del Vasto, *Pèlerinage aux Sources*, p.290 (Denoël, 1943).
7 Lanza del Vasto, *L'Arche avait pour Voilure une Vigne*, p.21 (Denoël, 1978).
8 Died in 1945.
9 Madeleine Slade, *The Spirit's Pilgrimage*, p.196 (Longmans, 1960).
10 See telegram of that date in *CWMG,* vol.65, p.374.
11 *CZA,* S.25.3587, cited in Isa Sarid and Christian Bartolf, *Hermann Kallenbach: Mahatma Gandhi's friend in South Africa: A Concise Biography*, p.75 (Gandhi-Informations-Zentrum, 1997).
12 Ibid, p.77.
13 Ibid, p.77.
14 See her book, *Gandhi and his Jewish Friends*, p.64.
15 Arnaud de Mareuil, Lanza del Vasto, p.131 (Seghers, 1966).

Chapter 7
The Relevance of the Indian Context of 1937

1 *CWMG*, vol.69, p.192.

2 Father: Gandhi was addressed as Bapu; he was the father of the nation, but he also liked to think of himself as a mother.
3 M. Slade, *The Spirit's Pilgrimage*, p.288–9.
4 Andrews, as well as Kallenbach, had helped the non-violent South African first Satyagraha. Madeleine Slade (Mirabehn), in 1938, was consulting with Gandhi about organizing a non-violent movement in Czechoslovakia – that she will not have time to set afoot before Hitler's invasion – and Lanza del Vasto who will effectively lead non-violent actions in France in later years, after Gandhi's death.
5 Lanza del Vasto, *L'Arche avait pour Voilure une Vigne*, p.18–19.
6 *Harijan*, 30th of September 1939, *CWMG,* vol.70, p.205.
7 Gandhi's statement to Shertok, 4th of July 1937 (*Central Zionist Archives,* S.25.3587), in Shimoni, *Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews*, p.33.
8 November 1938.
9 Ten thousand of them according to G.Shimoni, *Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews,* p.27.
10 Yogesh Chadha, *Rediscovering Gandhi*, p.349 (Century Books, 1997).
11 *CWMG*, vol.65, p.231.
12 'I have accepted Maulana Abul Kalam Azad as my guide. My suggestion, therefore, to you is that conversation should be opened in the first instance with the Maulana Sahib.' This choice followed the death of Dr. Ansari, who had been advising Gandhi on Muslim matters.
13 *CWMG*, vol.66, p.212.
14 Y. Chadha, *Rediscovering Gandhi*, p.346.
15 Stanley Wolpert,*Jinnah of Pakistan*, p.147 (Oxford University Press, 1984).
16 Jinnah's speech at the Lucknow Session of the Muslim League, 15th October 1937, 'where 21 years before he had forged the pact (the Lucknow Pact) that brought Congress and League together for the first time, heralding a bright era of Hindu-Muslim unity.' Stanley Wolpert, ibid, p.151.
17 S. Wolpert, ibid, p.152.
18 Ibid, p.155.
19 Gandhi to Kallenbach, 28th August 1937, *CWMG*, vol.96, p.290.
20 August 1937.
21 *CWMG*, vol.66, p.446–447.
22 On the telegram Amrit Kaur noted: 'Yes – acceptance of office by Congress.'
23 *CWMG*, vol.65, p.432.

24 *CWMG*, vol.96, p.291.
25 J. Nehru, *The first 60 Years*, vol.1, p.569–570.
26 Nehru to Abdur Rahman, 24th May 1947.
27 Sarvepalli Gopal, *Selected Works of J. Nehru*, p.474, vol.1, 1889–1947 (Jonathan Cape, London, 1975–1984). See Sarvepalli Gopal's analysis of how Nehru's views changed (under Gandhi's influence), vol.2, p.169.
28 See G. Shimoni, Gandhi, *Satyagraha and the Jews*, p.30.
29 16th and 28th of August 1937.
30 Theodor Herzel (1860–1904) was the founder of the Zionist movement.
31 Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*, p.108.
32 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims*, p.138.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid, p.142.
35 See Jean-Pierre Alem, *Juifs et Arabes, 3 000 Ans d'Histoire,* p.146 (Grasset, 1968).
36 The previous publication was called *Young India*.
37 Andrews helped not only the South African Indians during and after Gandhi's stay in South Africa but also the other Indians of the diaspora.

Chapter 8
O Time, Suspend Your Flight

1 *CWMG*, vol.96, Gandhi to Kallenbach, August 16th, 1937, p.289.
2 Ibid, August 28th, 1937, p.290.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 See P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, p.226 (Cambridge University Press, 1972).
6 G. Shimoni, Gandhi, *Satyagraha and the Jews*, p.37.

Chapter 9
End of a Summer Dream

1 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims*, p.151.
2 The Grand Mufti was caught by French coastal guards and arrested. The British asked for his deportation which was refused, and the Mufti began to operate from his Lebanon basis.
3 See the correspondence of Gandhi to Kallenbach at that time, in *CWMG*, vol.96.
4 Gideon Shimoni, *Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews,* p.34.

5 Shimoni, ibid, p.33.
6 *CWMG*, vol.96, p.287.
7 *CWMG*, vol.65, p.325.
8 *CWMG*, vol.96, p 288.
9 *CWMG*, vol.65, p.370.
10 *CWMG*, vol.65, p.424.
11 *CWMG*, vol.96, p.291.
12 *CWMG*, vol.96, p.291.
13 *CWMG*, vol.96, p.289.
14 Ibid.
15 *CWMG*, vol.96. p.291.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid, vol.96, p.292.

Chapter 10
The Depressing Year 1938

1 *Foundations of Pakistan, All-India Muslim League*, Documents : 1906–1947, edited by Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada, vol.2, 1924–1947, 1970, (National Publishing House, Karachi).
2 A.M. Zaidi, Resolutions : *Indian National Congress, Glorious Tradition*, vol.3.
3 Ibid.
4 *CWMG*, vol.66, p.446–447.
5 See the exchange of letters from April to June with Sushila Nayyar and Pyarelal.
6 Judith Brown, *Prisoner of Hope*, p.286 (Yale University Press, London, 1989).
7 *CWMG,* vol.66, p.455.
8 Isa Sarid, *Hermann Kallenbach: Mahatma Gandhi's friend in South Africa. A Concise Biography*, p.78.
9 *CWMG*, vol.96, p.295.
10 See Document 1, *The Jews*.

Chapter 11
The Two Palestines

1 Norman Rose, *Churchill and Zionism*, in *A Major New Assessment of his Life in Peace and War*, p.153, ed. by Robert Blake and Wm. Roger Louis (Oxford University Press, 1993).

2 *The Jewish Enigma*, p.221, editor David Englander (Open University, 1992).
3 *Harijan*, November 26th, 1938, see Document 1.
4 *Young India*, March 23rd, 1921: 'By no canon of ethics or war therefore can Palestine be given to the Jews as a result of the war.'
5 1930 estimate, India, 1930–1, vol. XIII.
6 *CWMG*, vol.68, p.93.
7 Madeleine Slade (Mirabehn), *The Spirit's Pilgrimage*, p.212.
8 CWMG, vol.68, p.95.
9 Gandhi to Mahadev Desai, November 5th, 1938: 'Mirabehn has changed her mind. She has decided to go to the Frontier Province.' See *CWMG*, vol.68, p.123.
10 Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, p.36 (Orient Longmans, 1959).

Chapter 12
A Pharaoh May Come That Knows Not Joseph

1 Gandhi to Kallenbach, November 26th, 1938, *CWMG*, vol.96, p.296.
2 See *Harijan*, December 8th, 9th, 17th, 1938; January 7th, February 11th and 18th, April 15th, May 27th, 1939.
3 See Avner Falk, *Buber and Gandhi*, in Ramachandran G. and Mahadevan, T.K. (eds.), *Quest for Peace* (Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, 1970).
4 Margaret Chatterjee, *Gandhi and his Jewish Friends*, p.165; see also note 3 of the Epilogue.
5 Ibid, Epilogue, note 3.
6 S. Wolff's article is dated April 27th, 1958 and is entitled Gandhi und das Palaestina Problem, in Christian Bartolf, *Wir wollen die Gewalt nicht, Die Buber-Gandhi Kontroverse*, p.122: 'So I was and I remain therefore the only one in Palestine who exchanged correspondence with Gandhi.'
7 *C.Z.A*, S.25.3887, Shohet to Epstein, March 7th, 1939, cited in G. Shimoni, *Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews*, p.49.
8 Martin Gilbert, *Exile and Return*, p.208.
9 February 14th, 1939.
10 Yogesh Chadha, *Rediscovering Gandhi*, p.358.
11 Ibid, p.360.

Chapter 13
Disengagement

1 S. S. Pirzada, *Foundations of Pakistan*, vol.2.
2 Ibid, p.317.
3 Ibid, p.317.
4 Ibid, p.315.
5 A.M. Zaidi, *Indian National Congress, The Glorious Tradition*, vol.4.
6 Ibid, vol.3.
7 Ibid, vol.3.
8 See the analysis of Avi Schlaim, *The Balfour Declaration and its Consequences*, p.267, in *Yet More Adventures with Britannia* by Wm. R. Louis.
9 A.M. Zaidi, ibid, vol.4.
10 See the dating of the note in *CWMG*, vol.96, p.299.
11 See G. Shimoni's views, in *Gandhi*, *Satyagraha and the Jews*, p.51.
12 Ibid, quoting the *Central Zionist Archives*.
13 Isa Sarid, *Hermann Kallenbach,* p.80.
14 Gandhi to Amrit Kaur, March 31st, 1939, vol.69, p.94.
15 Parliamentary Papers Cmd 6019.
16 Martin Gilbert, *Exile and Return,* p.226.
17 W. Laqueur, *A History of Zionism,* p.531.
18 T. Segev, *One Palestine, Complete,* p.441.
19 May 7th, 1939, T. Segev, *One Palestine, Complete,* p.435.
20 Ben Gurion, *A Personal History,* p.54.

Chapter 14
An Almost Insoluble Problem

1 John and Hadawi, *The Palestine Diary*, vol.1, p.329.
2 Wm. Roger Louis, *Imperialism at Bay,* p.54.
3 See Glen-Balfour-Paul, *Britain's Informal Empire in the Middle East,* p.507, note 26, citing Hurewitz, in Wm. Roger Louis and Judith Brown, eds, *The Twentieth Century* vol. IV, (Oxford University Press, 1999).
4 Cabinet Minutes, September 20th, 1947.
5 Wm. Roger Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonization* (Collected Essays, p.403 (I.B.Tauris, London. 2006).
6 Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis, eds, *The Dissolution of the British Empire* in *The 20th* Century, vol.4, p.336 (Oxford University Press, 1999).

7 See G. Shimoni, *Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews,* p.57, note 7: Shimoni was shown the contents of an unpublished letter from Pyarelal to the *New Yorker* dated July 10th, 1946.

8 Pyarelal report from Louis Fischer papers, in Mahatma Gandhi Research and Media Service – Gandhi, the Jews and Palestine.

9 Ibid.

10 Louis Fischer, *Gandhi and Stalin, Two Signs at the World's Crossroads,* p.49 (Gollancz, 1948).

11 Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi*, p.455 (Jonathan Cape, London, 1951).

12 Presumably Gandhi said '*prior*' and not '*a priori*', which would be a reference to a claim that is self-evident in the absence of evidence to the contrary in court. He certainly used the words '*good case*', because in the *Harijan* issue of May 18th, 1947, the very last one to mention Palestine before his death, he talked about '*a proper case*'. Therefore it is of interest to penetrate Gandhi's thought by stating here a legal definition of *a good case.*

'A good case' usually means that there is sufficient evidence to support a legal position in court or that a legal argument based on legal analysis is a good one on a probability level approaching a preponderance of probabilities. It does not mean that there is sufficient evidence to constitute 'proof' to the required probability level in the forensic process.

13 From *Harijan*, July 21st, 1946, in Mahatma Gandhi Research and Media Service – Gandhi, the Jews and Palestine, ibid.

14 See G. Shimoni, *Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews,* p.57, citing the *Central Zionist Archives,* S 25. 7485: '*Report on the Inter-Asian Conference* (April 17th, 1947)'.

15 From *The Hindu*, ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 *CWMG*, vol.68, p.191.

18 Ibid.

19 See above: Gandhi to Lanza del Vasto.

20 . . . 'given proper training and proper generalship, non-violence can be practised by masses of mankind.' Gandhi, December 9th, 1938.

Conclusion

1 'If I were a Czech' was written in Peshawar on October 6th, 1938 (and published in *Harijan* on October 15th, 1938). Gandhi wrote to

Mirabehn accepting her offer to go to Czekoslovakia on November 5th, 1938:

'Evidently you had the call perhaps at the same hour that I felt you will have it. As far as my recollection goes, I wrote to you also that if you felt the urge I would let you go. Of course the idea originated not with me, but with Rajkumari; and I wrote to her suggesting that she should write to you directly. But in view of your letter, all this becomes past history. We will discuss ways and means . . . '(*CWMG*, vol.96, p.95).

2 Gandhi to Mirabehn, ibid.

3 The students wanted to avenge the execution of Baghat Singh, a terrorist, who was hanged after the Gandhi-Irwin pact. Madeleine Slade, *The Spirit's Pilgrimage*, p.124–125.

4 Gandhi to Mahadev Desai, November 5th, 1938, *CWMG,* vol.68, p.93.

Envoy

1 Lanza del Vasto, *L'Arche avait pour Voilure une Vigne*, p.247.

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